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REVIEWS:
Wing Commander: Prophecy,
Heavy Gear, Turok, Lords of Magic,
FIFA 98, War Wind II, Hellfire,
Seven Kingdoms

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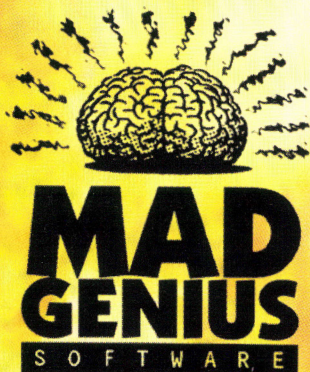
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MARCH 1998
VOLUME 5, NUMBER 3

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Excalibur 2555 A.D. P.64



MYSTERIES SOLVED

39 The Riven Walkthrough

By Barry Brenesal

With more than 1 million copies of Riven sold during its first month on store shelves, we bet there are some of you out there in need of a helping hand. Fret no more. Here's the PC Games walkthrough to see you to the end of the game.



THIS ARTICLE NEVER HAPPENED

46 X-Files Game Revealed

By Daniel Morris

Fox is conspiring to bring you an X-Files game. When they told us it would be an FMV adventure, we thought they were planting a false story to cover up their true intentions. We were wrong. Can the show's stars, producers, and writers elevate the FMV genre to a new level? Read our exclusive preview and check out the review of X-Files: Unrestricted Access.

SAY GOODBYE TO SWEETIEPIE

50 Quake II

By Rob Smith and Willem Knibbe

You'll lose track of hours—maybe even days—playing id's follow-up to Quake. Quake II is so good, it made us lose track of our girlfriends. Here's why they despise (and we love) what may be the best action shooter of all time. Bonus weapons-briefing and cheats included.



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EDITOR'S NOTE



STEVE KLETT

The Truth Is Here

There are a lot of hardcore *X-Files* fans in the *PC Games* offices. Come Sunday night, we all turn off our PCs and turn on the boob-tube to catch the weekly exploits of FBI agents Mulder and Scully as they tirelessly pursue the truth.

Our zeal for the *X-Files* show is precisely why we've had our best field agents out trying to infiltrate the offices of Fox Interactive for months. Fox is producing the *X-Files* game for the PC, you see, and we just couldn't wait to find out what we could about it.

After months of getting stonewalled, we finally caught a break: On a stormy day in L.A., just before the New Year, our top L.A. agent—Mr. Daniel Morris—got inside. Not only did he see the game, he talked with its producers and absconded with screens—the first ever seen outside of Fox's offices.

The end result: This month *PC Games* is proud to bring you the world-exclusive first look at an FMV adventure game that, for once, we are truly excited about. The same talent driving the show is behind the game, so we've high hopes indeed. Check out what we've learned so far (starting on page 46), and rest assured that we'll bring you even more info on the game as it becomes available.

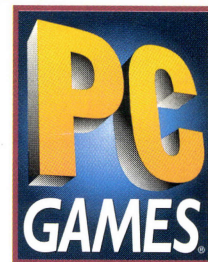
We may not be able to play *The X-Files* yet, but that's okay. Another little game called *Quake II* is out now, and it's gobbling up all our free time. Not content with merely providing a review (page 50), we tapped resident *Quake* expert Willem "TheWeasel" Knibbe to bring you vital stats on the game's weapons and power-ups. *Quake II*'s weapons balance is truly extraordinary, and reading *TheWeasel*'s tips will help you survive in a deathmatch. Heck, you can read 'em and then try and frag *TheWeasel* and many other *PC Games* editors (aka LPBs) on our dedicated *Quake II* server...see the story for the address.

We also thought many of you would be hopelessly lost in the world of *Riven* by now, so we put together a late New Year's present for you: a concise walkthrough of the complete game (see page 39).

And, as usual, you'll find our reviews section bursting at the seams with the latest games on the shelves, including *Heavy Gear*, *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, and *Turok* (a surprisingly fun port). You'll note, however, that our Game of the Month is a sports title, and a soccer sim at that—EA's *FIFA 98*, which is neck and neck with *NHL 98* as the finest PC sports game ever, as far as we're concerned. I even like it, and I can't stand soccer! Check it out (page 63).

Happy gaming!

Steve Klett
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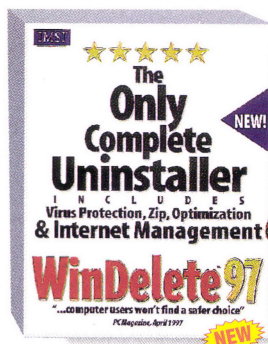
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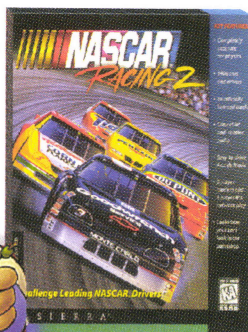
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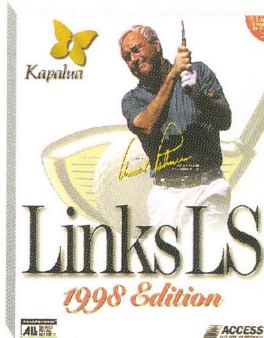
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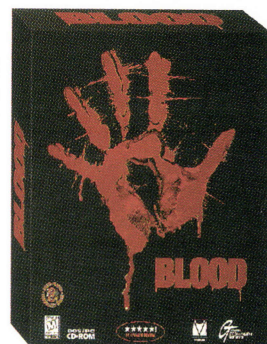
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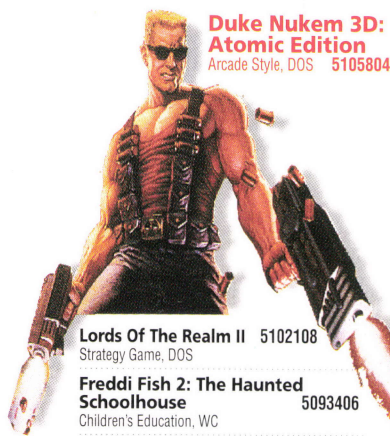
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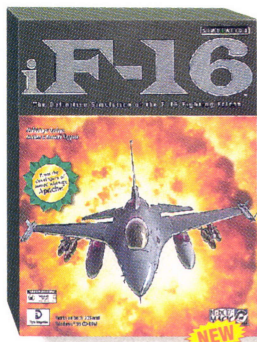
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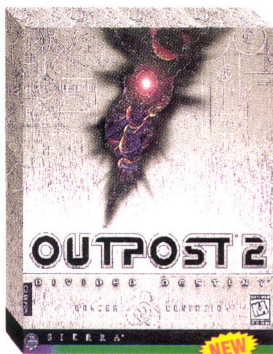
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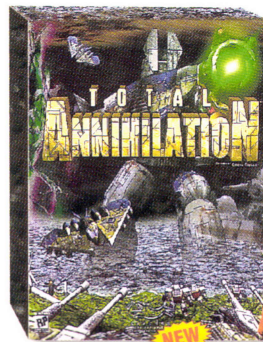
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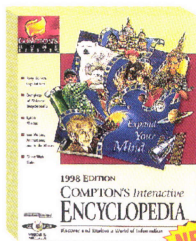
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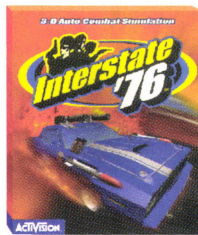
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- Spycraft: The Great Game** 5063201
Adventure, DOS

- Berlitz Live Spanish** 5043401
Language Tutorial, WC

- Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee** 5130505
Arcade Style, DOS, Pent133, 16mb

- Dilbert: Not Just A Calendar** 5127709
Home/Personal, WC

- Heavy Gear** 5132709
Arcade Style, Pent100, 16mb



Kindergarten Blaster 5128400
Children's Ed., WC



Dark Reign 5129200
Strategy Game, Pent90, 16mb

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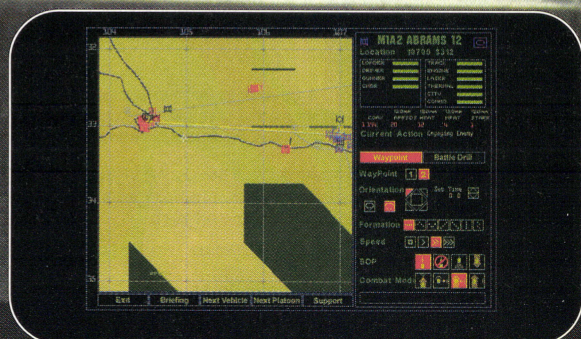
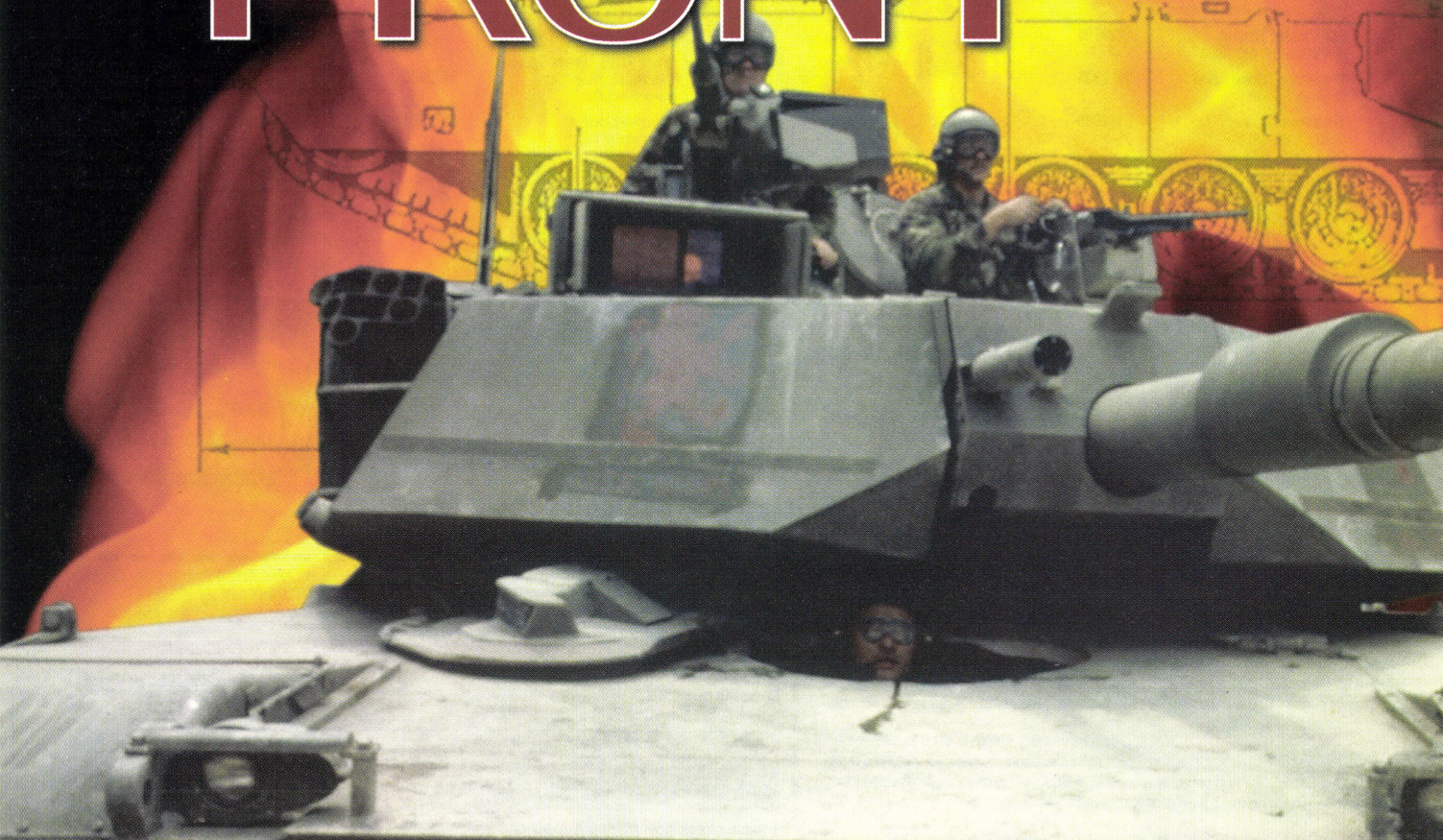
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OF BATTLE...

AND YOU'VE GOT
A FRONT ROW



SEAT.

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24

GREAT DEMOS

Demo of the Month:

Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)

Also:

Air Warrior III (I-Magic)
 Andretti Racing (EA)
 Armored Fist 2 (NovaLogic)
 AstroFire
 Baldur's Gate .avi (Interplay)
 Balls of Steel (GT Interactive)
 Deadlock II (Accolade)
 Extreme Tactics (Media Station)
 F1 Racing Simulation (Ubi Soft)
 F-22 Raptor (NovaLogic)
 Final Liberation (SSI)
 Grand Theft Auto (ASC Games)
 Hockey Pong
 Jack Nicklaus 5 (Accolade)
 JN5 Course Designer (Accolade)
 Lords of Magic (Sierra On-Line)
 Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee (GT Interactive)
 Pandemonium 2 (Crystal Dynamics)
 Shadow Master (Psygnosis)
 TerraFire
 Wing Commander: Prophecy (Origin)

MCI Wireplay

EarthLink Network

TEN

C&C: Red Alert Enabler
 Deadlock Shareware
 Quake Enabler
 Quake Shareware

Mplayer

Big Red Racing Enabler
 Command & Conquer Enabler
 C&C: Red Alert Enabler
 Quake Enabler

HEAT

Getting Started

Win 95

Simply place the CD in your disc drive and the Autorun function will run the interface.

Win 3.1

Insert the CD in your disc drive. In Program Manager, select the File menu and then Run. In the command-line box, type d:\pcgames.exe (where "d" is the letter of your disc drive).

Important Tech-Help FAQ

Q: When I run the interface, I get a message that says "Can't find VB40016.dll" or some other "Can't find" file error.

A: Just run the setup file by clicking on the Start button, Run, then type d:\setup.pif (where "d" is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).

Q: During the setup routine, I get a message that says "Can't register file."

A: In this case, you will get a dialog box asking to Abort, Retry, or Ignore the error. Click on Ignore. The setup routine will be executed successfully, and the interface will run without problems.

Q: This demo doesn't work.

A: Read the notes accompanying each game in the description box—they'll cover most eventualities. Refer any game-

specific tech-support questions to the game's publisher. Help is also usually posted on publishers' Web sites.

Q: Should I reinstall DirectX when prompted by a game's install program?

A: As a rule, no. Be aware that most current demos now use DirectX 5.0, which can be found in the root directory of the CD-ROM.

Q: I didn't get the CD-ROM with my magazine. How can I obtain one?

A: To upgrade your subscription from non-CD to include this feast of gaming greats, direct your inquiries to pcgames subs@pcgames.com.

Q: I tried all the above, and I'm still having problems.

A: Direct CD tech-related questions to ctou@pcgames.com.

This is where you'll find all the games featured on this issue's CD. Click on any of them to highlight the relevant information about a game.

Get up and running on the online services in a flash. Click on any of these services to run the setup routines.



Once you've selected a game from the Demos list, information about that game, installation advice (which may be pretty important, so please take a moment to read it), and some gameplay hints appear in this box.

PC Games.com is one of the most happening gaming Web sites out there. Click on this button, and you'll be prompted to locate the executable file that runs your Web browser (it's likely to be iexplore.exe or netscape.exe).

One click on this button runs the install or setup routine of your selected game.



Windows 95

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ONE DEAD,
THE OTHER POWERLESS
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OUT OF THE VOID,
YOU OPEN YOUR EYES
AND STRUGGLE
TO UNDERSTAND.

ADVENTURE

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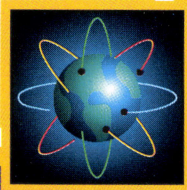


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DEMOS

Arsenal
Frogger
Fighting Force
F-22 Raptor
Shadow Master
Tomb Raider II
Turok v.1.01

PATCHES

Close Combat: ABTF v. 2.0a
Men In Black
Myth 1.1b4 Updater
Quake II v. 3.10
Tomb Raider II

PREVIEWS

Battlezone
Interstate '76: Nitro Pack
Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith
Rebellion
Touring Car Championship

REVIEWS

Extended versions of these
PC Games reviews:
Battlespire
FPS: Football '98
Hellfire
Lords of Magic
NetStorm
Politika
plus:
NBA Action '98

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Don't adjust your monitor! That's still PC Games Online at www.pcgames.com, only we've got a new look and are now part of something bigger:

Games.net—The IDG Games Network (games.net). Launched by PC World Online, this new mega-games site is a one-stop service dedicated to all things games-related, delivering top-flight content from PC Games Online, Tip-World, PC World's Online Game Channel, and *THE WEB Magazine*. All of the latest news, reviews, previews, demos, and tips—plus *PC Games* exclusives and community-driven features such as chats and live events—are now showcased in one easy-to-use interface. Come see us at our new home!

GOLDEN FIRE HYDRANT NOMINATIONS ARE IN—CAST YOUR VOTE!

Happy Puppy will be presenting its notorious Golden Fire Hydrant awards at E3 this year, with traditional categories like Best Real-Time Strategy Game, plus its own infamous game honors, including Best Use of Adult Themes and Most Obnoxious Ad Campaign. The nominations have been made by Happy Puppy users, and voting is now underway at happypuppy.com. Make your picks—you might even win a trip to the awards ceremony in Atlanta.



HOT DOWNLOADS

Always searching for the hottest game demo? Or maybe you just need the newest patch for a game you already have. Visit our Downloads section, where we've taken downloading to the next level. We even include short reviews with most game demos.

THE SOURCE

It's almost time for the launch of our community channel, The Source. Inside our chat room, you'll be able to talk with other gamers, the Games.net staff, and even scheduled guests. There'll be message boards, too. And those of you eager for the newest gaming gossip will be psyched to know that James Fudge (aka Prophet) of GameWire fame is now writing for us: he's our man for covering all the dirt. You'll find all this and lots more on The Source!

IT DOESN'T STOP THERE

Not only do we offer daily news updates and timely features, but you'll also find handy strategies for *Worms 2*, plus interviews with the Heavy Gear team and the developer of the original (and soon-to-be-updated) *Battlezone* game. And don't forget our exclusive online columns, like *The Sniper*, our tribute to the ruthless world of playing to win; *The Fan*, a look at everything relating to sports-gaming; and the insightful rants of *The Grumpy Gamer*. What are you waiting for? Get your butt down to www.pcgames.com!



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INCOMING!

LETTERS

Question of the Month: As Good as You'd Hoped?

All through '97 (and straggling into '98), there were games that everyone was waiting for: Myth. Quake II. Riven. Heavy Gear. Starcraft. And many more. Now that they've been out for awhile, we want to know: What'd you think? Did the game you'd been waiting months to play exceed your expectations? Leave you pissed and penniless? Somewhere in between? Send your experiences with winter's heavy-hitters to PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd. Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; email: pcgamesletters@pcgames.com. One randomly chosen letter-writer wins a free game and a PC Games T-shirt. Please include your full name with each letter.



No More Larry?

Help—I'm in shock! I recently read an interview with Al Lowe saying that there isn't going to be a Leisure Suit Larry VIII. He said he didn't think the fans wanted "just another Larry game." Well, this gamer does! Could you please, please verify this for me?

Mat Davis
Via email

No worries, Mat: According to Sierra, "There's nothing in the works right now, but, given that Leisure Suit Larry's one of our most popular series, it's a pretty sure bet that there'll be a LSLVIII sometime in the near future." Speaking of bets, Sierra's at work on a title that should tide you over for now. Leisure Suit Larry's Casino, to be released in May, puts the '70s swinger in charge of a gambling den. Playing as one of 25 Larry-series characters, you'll challenge the computer or other players online at poker, blackjack, craps, roulette, and more. Or you can enter Larry's Comedy Club to participate in interactive joke-telling, pick-up-line contests, word games, and the like. Sounds like scary Larry fun.

—Ed.

Machine Envy

Thank you so much for denouncing ever-growing system requirements for games in December's Player ("Bah, Humbug!"). How

would it be if, for every new movie coming out (or about every six months), we were forced to help build a new theater, or pay a \$40 ticket price? Yeah, right!

Watch. The movie industry struggled when VCRs came out because we didn't want to pay their prices, and many theaters sucked. But let's get it straight: With all of the improvements in various media, nothing has beaten a creative, well-thought-out product, no matter what the genre.

So, how about some creativity in games? We can, as always, humble ourselves now and find the joy of discovery, or learn it all later the hard way. I opt for the former. This whole upgrade thing is inane.

Rob Callicotte
Via email

Go ahead and gripe about the condition of rising system requirements. I'm putting along on a P75 with 24MB of RAM, 800MB HD, a 28.8 modem, a 4x CD-ROM drive—a gaming hellhole. Not only that, but I run games in 320-by-200, and I don't mind. Those hyped 3D-accelerated graphics are eye candy and aren't necessary for a good game nowadays; gameplay is what's important. All you need is an IPX game, a Net'ed computer, and Kali.

Alex McDougall
Via email

Re: December's Player: Well spoken, I say!

As a computer imager by trade and computer gamer by hobby, I can vouch for the validity of computer-game requirements climbing much faster than those in other areas



Kids' Games?

So much for sunny mellow joy-joy. December's Question of the Month (Kids' Games?) catalyzed a brew of opinionated letters. Responses were mixed: Many of you gave these titles the OK, while naysayers ranged from thoughtful (like Chris Wash, who complained of poor plots and annoying voiceovers and is also our monthly prize-winner) to the "I'll only play 3D bloodbaths" variety. Here's a sample:

I think kids' games suck: they're too cartoony and console-ish. I'd never be caught with one.

Kevin Bierbaum
Via email

I'd rather deathmatch someone in Duke or Quake than watch Woody or Buzz walk through a toy-filled room any day.

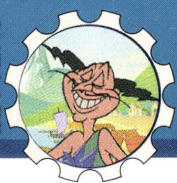
Michael Hardyman
Via email

There's nothing wrong with playing games aimed at younger children. It's a relief sometimes to get away from all the hype about the "best graphics," etc., and just sit down and have a good time with a fun game.

Kevin Trevisan
Via email

Question: "Is the game challenging and entertaining?" I'll gladly play games designed for kids if they are fun and have some level of difficulty. Look at Tetris: It can be played by all ages. Children and teenagers can play adult games; why not the other way around? Not everything has to have an adult theme to be enjoyable.

Cynthia Walsh
Via email



INCOMING!

Rants!

The new place to bash what you hate most in gaming. Send gripes to rants@pcgames.com.

What's all this hype about Quake II? Why waste money on that when you could spend your \$40 on a good game with a story, like Jedi Knight? I thought Quake sucked wind.

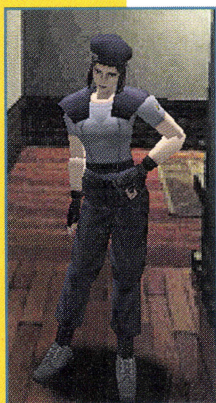
—Scott Pendleton,
via email

I just finished playing Total Annihilation, and I have one thing to say: Don't strategy game-makers think? TA has great graphics, but the sounds are annoying and the sides aren't balanced; Red Alert has well-balanced sides, but the graphics are awful and the AI is dumb; Dark Reign has great AI and gameplay, but poor graphics. Will someone *please* make a strategy game that has all the great features in one game?

—Yoni Leitersdorf, via email

I'm a teenage girl and (gasp!) a gamer. I'm bothered by the number of outrageously proportioned women wearing approximately one inch of metal underwear and go-go boots. Since when is a tiny metal bikini going to protect you? And with things like they've got, I'm surprised they can even stand upright! Female characters should be proportioned correctly and dressed in GIs. These perverted fantasies alienate half the gaming market.

—Maverick, via email



of computing. I am pushed into upgrading my game system far more often than I am my workstation, or would be, if I did it as often as I "needed" to.

With a P60 as my now-obsolete gaming sidekick, I come away from the magazine with less and less enthusiasm. The end result of such a reaction will be far-reaching for the industry, as I'm less inclined to buy new games. This trend of gamers being filtered out via economic inability to keep up with technology, combined with the glut of new games that can't possibly all be bought and played, will create a drastic reduction in the amount of games being produced. I, too, am contemplating the fate the last letter-writer in the column suffered—abandoning computer games.

Rod Batschelet
Via email

Online Issues

Blade is way out to lunch. I got so sick of reading his December Sega ad (or as he called it, "Pay to Play... er, Okay"), I could barely finish it. But having done so, I respond: "Pay to Play: Up Yours, eh?" I play Warcraft II on the Internet Gaming Zone, and though I hate Microsoft and the Zone, I play because it's *free*. If Microsoft decided to charge for this, they'd

lose one patron for sure: I have not, do not, nor will I ever pay for online games. I will *never* pay to play as long as I can play for free. If free places cease to exist, I won't play multiplayer anymore: it's that simple.

Does it make sense to pay \$60 for a game and then pay more, month after month, to play it online? I think not. Most gamers, like myself, are not millionaires and don't have an extra \$9.95 a month to kick around.

Blade describes HEAT as "[a] retail box with shareware games, a six-month subscription, and T-shirt (whoopie!), all for \$29.95—now *that's* excellent." That's the stupidest thing I've ever read. You're a fool if you pay for shareware, and if someone wears a T-shirt with some kind of HEAT.net logo on it, I have to say, "Nerd alert!" That leaves the six-

month subscription. Apparently, HEAT.net is \$5.95 a month—so, if you leave all the crap out, you're basically getting a \$6.00 rebate. Isn't that totally awesome? (Heavy sarcasm intended.)

Jon Rekrut
Winnipeg, Canada

As an online gamer, your December Opponent struck many sympathetic cords in me. Online game players have gotten so accustomed to free (or close to free) games that they attempt to hold onto them like a lost childhood. Gamers have adamantly said, "I refuse to pay for games!" Unfortunately, to run a true online game, like those Kesmai and Aries produce, you must charge something.

What is the "viable economic model" for online game services? I strongly believe that it's a flat rate for unlimited service. Most true online games are role-play-based in some sort of way. A flat rate allows you to participate in the social communication that this role-playing demands. Ten dollars a month isn't a bad rate, but the higher it goes, with ISP charges on top, the fewer people will be able to afford it—especially with Kahn and Kali offering an almost guaranteed future of free play.

John "Pacer" Nelson
Via email

Whoops

Looks like the holidays left us a little loopy: In January's issue, in our "Put Down That Gun!" story, we mistakenly labeled a screenshot of Marble Drop as Lose Your Marbles. Also, in that month's At the Wire "More Noise" piece, we inadvertently attributed Aureal as saying that the VideoLogic SonicStorm card would support Aureal's A3D format; actually, Aureal says VideoLogic is not a licensee of A3D, and the Sonic Storm card cannot fully support A3D in hardware. We apologize for any confusion caused by these errors.

GAMERS SEEKING GAMERS

Adam Brownbaduddah@juno.com
Richard Maertzdoom_guy@juno.com
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GAMEWIRE

Intel Makes 3D Play

The No. 1 most-asked hardware question from *PC Games* readers for the last year and a half has been, "What 3D accelerator should I buy?" Such consumer trends aren't lost on the folks at Intel, who are about to turn the 3D-accelerator industry

upside down with the new I740 3D chipset.

The I740 is the latest effort in Intel's ongoing plan to introduce stricter high-performance standards for PC components. Remember, it was Intel who introduced us to PCI slots by standardizing them on Pentium motherboards. And just try and find a motherboard without an Intel-standard chipset managing the works. Last year, Intel moved into video in a big way with its accelerated graphics port (AGP). The big news about AGP is that it's a direct channel into a computer's system RAM. Because it's also a wider channel, AGP is faster than PCI.

The I740 is designed to work hand-in-hand with AGP cards. The same speed benefits AGP video-cards

have are now available to the I740 for 3D acceleration. What's more, the I740 can access system RAM for use as texture memory—lots of it. Features that will benefit from the AGP connection include alpha blending, texture mapping and specular high-lights, MIP-mapping with bilinear filtering, and Z-buffering. If you sense a quantum shift about to zap the video-accelerator market, you could be right.

Intel wants to make powerful 3D acceleration part of the PC package rather than an expensive add-on, according to product-platform architect Jay Sturges. By making the I740 an inexpensive chipset addition to motherboards or AGP cards, Intel may have the leverage to motivate more companies and consumers into buying AGP to get the extra horsepower. Since AGP is a

continued on page 32

Intel is pushing 3D in a big way, using Rage's Incoming as a poster child for its new I740 3D chip.



Str. Pouches was killed by Fuzicka
Dennis was killed by Fuzicka
Redneck was killed by Dnrockie

Quake II is already compatible with the I740 chipset.



COVERT OPS

Angry Angels

Following its well-received actioner Uprising, Cyclone has its own sort of spiritual adventure in store for us later this year in *Requiem: Wrath of the Fallen*. God can't keep his troops in line, and a group of rebellious angels hits terra firma in a bid for power. Players are cast as avenging angels sent to mop up the insurrection. As in *SiN* and *Half-Life*, this is an action game with a story and interaction with NPCs. Players will have to deal with AI characters with a purpose—and a not very friendly purpose at that. AI characters will also react according to how aggressive players are, or even if player weapons are raised or lowered when a meeting occurs. Not that there won't be plenty of opportunity

to blast things. But expect some of the weapons to be...well, angelic. Special powers include invisibility, resurrecting dead characters, blowing up enemies (that one's called Creator's Hand), shielding, turning characters into salt, and inhabiting (which allows players to possess other characters). Up to eight can play and expect 3D support.

Descent Does Wing Commander

Space-combat sims are a hard genre to crack, especially with the likes of the *Wing*



Cyclone's Requiem is lookin' good.

Commander series and *X-Wing* vs. *TIE Fighter* as the favored mounts for most star pilots. That's not stopping Interplay from pillaging its *Descent* franchise to come up with *Descent: FreeSpace—The Great War*.

Interplay can't tell us yet whether there will be anything in the story that connects to the previous *Descent* plots—that's the territory of *Descent 3*, to come later. However, *FreeSpace* is being developed by much of the original *Descent* design crew. The story so far: The Terran military has been fighting a bunch of space dredge called the Vasudians for 15 years, when a new race called the Shivans pops up and starts kicking butt. Earthlings



Let the PGL games begin.

PGL Snares 1,200

Seems like there are a lot of fraggers who want to turn pro. TEN reports that more than 1,200 people registered to compete in the first season of the Professional Gamers' League. Response was so high that the PGL had to extend the deadline for a week. Qualification matches, used to seed the top players in the league, have tallied more than 3 million Quake frags and 50,000 Red Alert matches.

CUC Joins Online Frag

The slightly over-crowded online-gaming-service club isn't stopping Sierra's parent, CUC International, from crashing the party.

CUC has launched a public beta-test of its new World Opponent Network (WON) as a showcase for its Sierra and Berkeley games. WON has put up 20 games as part of the test, including Outpost 2: Divided Destiny, Lords of the Realm II, Civil War Generals 2, FPS: Football '98, Trophy Bass 2, and MissionForce: CyberStorm. During the test (which will end April 1), online play at

www.won.net will be free, though gamers will have to own copies of the games.

Mplayer Gets Heavy, Quake II

Leading the charge into Mplayer's new action channel is Activision's Heavy Gear. To help build traffic to Heavy Gear and the channel, Activision provided copies of the official game-guide to the first 200 gamers who registered to play Heavy Gear on Mplayer. Activision is planning other one-time Heavy Gear promotions on an ongoing basis. Mplayer also just implemented a new Gizmo game launcher, which supports game rankings for the first time. The company was also the first of the services to support Quake II.

AD&D Fans Unite

TEN has announced the availability of Strategic Simulations' AD&D Dark Sun Online: Crimson Sands 2.0 on the service. The changes to this online-only game are primarily geared toward making missions more exciting and less like mundane errands. Also added are an orientation area for new players to get the hang of the game, and a new world map to make navigation easier. Due to changes in the gameplay, all existing characters have been reset to their original starting levels to maintain game balance and consistency.

—George T. Chronis

Gear it up on Mplayer.



and Vasudians team up to fight the new bad boys, and that's where FreeSpace starts. Sound familiar? In an alpha seen here at *PC Games*, FreeSpace looks and plays very much like a cross between X-Wing and WC: Prophecy. The interface is similar to X-Wing's, and the missions have a Wing Commander-like feel. Unlike WC, FreeSpace implements many of the control features seen in X-Wing. What FreeSpace has over LucasArts' space-combat sim is a strong single-player component of 30 missions. Multiplayer games will have a cooperative slant and handle up to 16 players with a Quake-style server. There may even be a multi-player campaign option. For you amateur coders out there, there will also be a mis-

sion editor. The SVGA graphics already look pretty good, but expect Glide and Direct3D support when FreeSpace ships in April. A P166 or better is recommended.

Dark Reign Expands

Real-time strategy darling Dark Reign is getting an expansion pack this spring called Rise of Shadowland. Augmenting the original release are two new alien races/armies, 12 new units, 18 additional single-player levels, cooperative multiplayer levels, an updated server, an enhanced map-construction kit, and some of the better fan levels submitted to Activision. The



New aliens and maps coming for Dark Reign.

construction enhancements allow players to create dynamic map features such as flood plains and boggy marshes. Three wild creatures have also been added. If players possess a trainer, these creatures can be tamed and used in battle. But

creature AI adapts differently, depending on which army controls them. Shadowland's price was not final at press time.

Microsoft Action

Microsoft plans to release two new action titles this spring: Urban Assault and Outwars. Urban Assault (previously code-

Power Grabs

Sierra Possesses Krondor

Despite 7th Level's ongoing financial problems and subsequent corporate reorganization that took the company out of games development, it looks like *Return to Krondor* will get released after all—by Sierra. Designed by author Raymond Feist (*Betrayal at Krondor*) and developed by Pyrotechnix, *Return to Krondor* has lately had an uncertain future. But Sierra (who published the earlier *Betrayal at Krondor*) stepped in and acquired Pyrotechnix from 7th Level. A new 3D engine called True3D was developed specifically for *Return to Krondor*'s mix of role-playing and action; the game is now scheduled for holiday 1998 release.



Return to Krondor has a new home.

Wilson Bails on Ion

After months of hiring talent away from other developers, Ion Storm CEO Mike Wilson has resigned to start his own publishing company,



Mike Wilson has left John Romero's dominion.

g.o.d. All ego aside, the name stands for Gathering of Developers. Wilson plans to partner with a yet-to-be-named group of respected developers in a more laid-back framework than those of industry titans such as Electronic Arts or Sierra. Wilson's title will be copublisher. Back at Ion Storm, John Romero will take on Wilson's old job as CEO.

Take 2 Teams with Interplay

After signing an affiliate partnership deal, Take 2's next two titles—*Jetfighter: Full Burn* and *Black Dahlia*—will be published by

Interplay. The deal covers North and South America. The latest *Jetfighter* features both American and Russian pilot choices; *Black Dahlia* is an adventure mystery set in 1930s Los Angeles.

—George T. Chronis

Intel 3D cont.

Pentium II-specific technology, getting consumers to think AGP and I740 would also mean boosting acceptance of the Pentium II—at the expense of competitors such as AMD and Cyrix.

The I740 doesn't mean doom for video-card makers such as STB, Diamond, Canopus, and ATI. Nor does it spell disaster for 3D-technology companies such as 3Dfx or nVIDIA. According to Andy Keane, vice president of marketing at 3Dfx, the new Voodoo II boards will run just fine in an AGP slot—directly accessing AGP's speed enhancements. There's also no reason why existing proprietary 3D chipsets cannot be adapted to AGP cards. But Intel's actions are forcing the 3D industry to shift to AGP or be left behind.

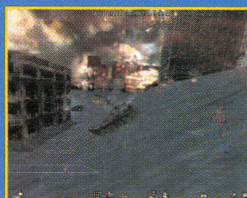
"Intel has the technology, brand recognition, and channel influence to wind up with as much as 30 percent of the OEM 3D chipset business in 1998," says Michael Hara, director of strategic marketing at nVIDIA.

Sturges says I740-based 3D will come with either 2MB, 4MB, 6MB, or 8MB of on-board SGRAM. The chipset will also support Direct3D and OpenGL acceleration. Games that already support I740 include *Quake II*, *Incoming*, *G Police*, and *Out of the Void*. Video-card makers known to be implementing I740 include Diamond, STB, and Number Nine.

—George T. Chronis

COVERT OPS CONT.

named *Anarchy*) combines first-person and strategy elements. Players can control 15 types of vehicles, including airplanes, helicopters, satellites, kamikaze jeeps, and tanks, while also commanding their entire army from an overhead transparent map. *UA* gameplay also involves resource-management and technology upgrading. *Outwars*, being developed by SingleTrac of *Jet Moto* and *Twisted Metal* fame, challenges players to lead an army against an alien insect force in a planet-by-planet battle to save the universe. *Starship Troopers*, anyone?



Look at the pretty 3D skies in Urban Assault.

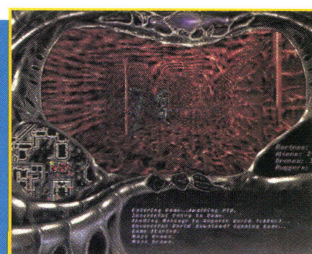
Alien Super Queens

You've already heard a lot about Kesmai's *Aliens Online*? Well, *PC Games* just heard about a new reward for top-ranked players—a super-queen alien. Any alien player who amasses 5,000 experience points will get the option of becoming a super-queen with special powers. To top off this status, each super-queen will get his or her own unique arena from which to "invite" colonial marines to visit. Kesmai is building a 60 percent to 40 percent numerical advantage for colonial marines into each arena. Marines get the cool pulse

weapons from the second movie, but because the aliens are so much more powerful

one-on-one, *Aliens Online* will force cooperative tactics on marine players. That's not necessarily the case with players choosing to fight as the facehugger, worker, or alien queen. Kesmai originally designed arenas to hold up to 100 players but reset that number to 40 to enhance gameplay enjoyment.

—George T. Chronis and Joe McCloud



Are you bad enough to be a super-queen?

At the Wire

GAMEWIRE



Microsoft's Direct3D couldn't outrun competition from OpenGL.

Microsoft Bows to OpenGL

After months of angry entreaties from members of the game-development community—most notably id's John Carmack—Microsoft has forged a partnership with SGI to merge Direct3D, DirectDraw, and OpenGL into a new 3D standard called Fahrenheit. The new API will run on both Win 32 and UNIX platforms. The partnership comes on the heels of Microsoft agreeing to support SGI's OpenGL API within all of its future Windows operating systems—releasing a new 3D-graphics device-driver kit (DDK) that will give graphics-chip vendors and OEMs an easier way of creating, certifying, and distributing 3D-graphics drivers. The new DDKs should make it easier to get seamless 3D acceleration for OpenGL-based games on Windows 95 and Windows NT. Until last December, Microsoft had been under fire by game developers for not accepting OpenGL standards and pushing its own D3D API. Fahrenheit development is scheduled to proceed over the next three years. The first developer version is expected in the first half of 1999, with the consumer variant scheduled for release in 2000.

More Pretty Explosions

Those Brits sure know how to make 3D explosions. Psygnosis is starting to leak gameplay screens from its upcoming Shadow Master fantasy shooter, and they look lovely. The company is already well known for

sumptuous 3D graphic pyrotechnics in WipeOut XL and G Police, and Shadow Master appears to be from the same mold. The look of the game is based on the artwork of fantasy artist Rodney Matthews, best known as an album-cover artist and session drummer supporting the likes of Genesis and Yes. As for whether the gameplay lives up to the game's looks, who knows? Hammerhead (of Toy Story and Mickey Mania fame) is the studio behind the

project, so we're hoping Shadow Master turns out to be more than a 3D realization of a drug-induced prog-rock action nightmare. What we know for sure is that there'll be 16 levels and 7 worlds to cut a swath through. And, wonders of wonders, Shadow Master is shipping with LAN and Internet multiplayer support for up to eight players. Now if Psygnosis would finally get around to multiplayer G Police...

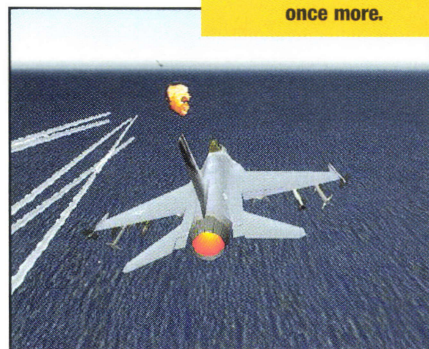
MicroProse Calls Off Wedding

The engagement between MicroProse and GT Interactive didn't last long. Both companies decided to call off their proposed merger after only two months. Both publishers say the split was mutual, so there will be no penalty fees assessed by either party. MicroProse and GT executives didn't elaborate on reasons for the reversal, saying only that the "time for merging was not right."



More Technicolor from Psygnosis in Shadow Master.

MicroProse flies alone once more.



Quake II Add-ons

Valve just made it easier to make Quake II levels. Version 1.6 of the Worldcraft level editor has been released, and it supports Quake II level design. Hexen II is also supported. We know it won't take long for the Quake community to whip up mods and add-ons for the ever-so-popular Quake II.

Riven and AoE Take Off

Computer games are finally getting some respect. Hot console games routinely ship more than a million units, and now PC games are narrowing the gap. In its first month of release, more than 1 million units of Riven were shipped, Red Orb reports. And in its first two months of release, Age of Empires has shipped more than 650,000 units, says Microsoft.

Fox Sports Spawns Games

As if spending millions of dollars to buy broadcast rights to major-league sports wasn't enough, Fox Sports is launching its own line of PC sports games in partnership with Fox Interactive. The first four games to appear on the Fox Sports Interactive label in 1998 will be Fox Sports Hockey, Fox Sports Soccer, Fox Sports Golf, and Fox Sports Tennis. The hockey game will be released in conjunction with the start of the NHL season. Fox has signed a long-term development deal with

Gremlin Interactive, creator of the VR Sports line, to produce games for Fox Sports Interactive.

—PC Games Staff



STEVE KLETT

Most of the editors here at PC Games don't understand *The Player's* fly-fishing affliction. Few people do.

Gone Fishin'

It's a beautiful April morning on the Big Hole River. A light snow has fallen in the night, leaving the banks of the river white—The Player's footsteps are the only signs of disturbance.

The Player can just make out the sleek shadow of a large 'bow sitting on the bottom. He ties on a size-18 midge—a Green Serendipity, to be precise—because, as everyone knows, midges (tiny two-winged flies that are active during cold months) are among the rainbow trout's favorite foods.

A few short false casts, and The Player lets the fly drop softly into the water just behind the log. The shadow rises and inhales the midge—fish on! After a 15-minute struggle, an 8-pound rainbow lies at The Player's feet.

Now, that story could've been from any of The Player's real-life fly-fishing trips—except for the 8-pound rainbow. You see, he's never caught a fish that big before, and, unlike other fishermen, he doesn't lie. [Ed. note: "Yeah, right!"] But it wasn't real...it was a virtual fishing trip courtesy of Sierra's FPS: Trophy Rivers.

As soon as the game arrived in the office, The Player ripped it open, loaded it, and started casting. Meanwhile, all the other editors gibbed each other in Quake II and sneered...heathens.

Most of the editors here at PC Games don't understand The Player's fly-fishing affliction. Few people do. And The Player prefers it that way—too many people crowd the riverbanks already.

However, to gain an ounce of understanding, The Player suggests that all the Quakeheads out there try a game of Trophy Rivers (the Trophy Bass series has sold a quarter million) after a massive deathmatch. The slow, deliberate pace of stalking trout with a fly rather than stalking people with a BFG would likely soothe frayed nerves and twitchy fingers. This is exactly why fly-fishermen pursue their sport with such passion and expensive equipment, all to let fish go: to relax and get away from the hustle and bustle of city life and work. It works.

Trophy Rivers sends you on a fishing trip to any one of five classic rivers: The Big Hole in Montana; the Sol Duc River in Washington; the White River in Arkansas; the Miramichi River in New Brunswick; and the Deschutes River in Oregon. Catchable fish include brown, brook,

bull, and rainbow trout; salmon; steelhead; mountain whitefish; and grayling. You can fish in a variety of tournaments for different species, or you can just head out for a leisurely day—it's up to you.

Once you're on the river, there are hundreds of flies to choose from, as well as video tips from the pros to help get you started. Heck, there's even bait- and spin-casting equipment and traditional lures for those who feel the art of fly-fishing is too much work. You can drift in a boat, canoe, or wade. However, oddly enough, you can't cast from shore: The game forces you to get in the water, which often scares away the fish—d'oh!

Conditions change as the day progresses—the behavior of the fish adjusts accordingly. They appear to model their real-life counter-

parts fairly well, too. Rainbow trout are often in the faster streams, browns are in cover and by the banks, salmon hang in the deep pools on the bottom, and so on.

The fly-casting mechanics are too simplified for The Player's tastes, but they aren't bad. You can mend line, for example, to achieve a more natural drift.

Unfortunately, the fish-fighting mechanics are way outta whack: A 2-pound whitefish will often fight like a 10-pound bass; light fish continually break heavy lines and tippets; and all fish streak around the screen at totally unrealistic, break-neck speeds. Stalking the fish—and

finding the right fly to get them to bite—is a lot of fun. Reelin' them can be a bit, well, dull.

And, as in Trophy Bass 1 and 2, you still don't lose flies or lures when fish break off or you snag your line. Adding a little resource management would add challenge. For instance, if the fish were only biting on one type of fly, and you only had one left, you might not make that impossible cast into heavy cover.

The Player's one of the most avid fly-fishermen around—some would even say he's obsessed—but after virtual-fishing for a few days, he could no longer ignore Quake II's call. He'll keep TR installed, though, for an occasional change of pace.

What's the biggest fish you've ever caught?
Email your fibs to
ThePlayer
@pcgames.com.

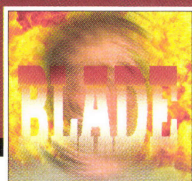


TROPHY RIVERS

PUBLISHER: Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
WEB: www.sierra.com
STREET PRICE: \$40

B-
OVERALL





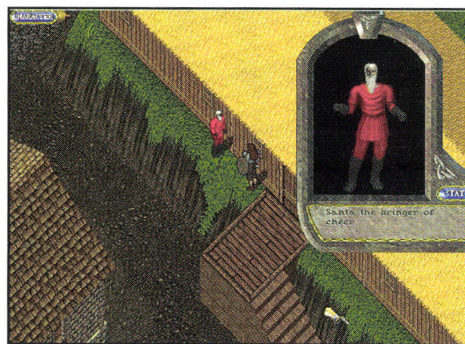
The Opponent revisits the world of Ultima Online to answer a crucial question: Is it working?

Britannia Deserted. What's Up?

In what could be the toughest test for the citizens of Britannia and their rulers at Origin, the world they created appears to be struggling. Not because of a disgruntled populace—but from a distinct lack of citizens.

People came to the world in droves, pursuing fame, fortune, honor, and dishonor. What they found, in many instances, was that the streets were not paved with gold. While many plugged away and found wealth, a definite class structure quickly emerged. There were haves and have-nots. To be in the former generally meant that you'd adopted the position of player-killer.

Many came with the true frontier spirit alive and beating in their chests. But there were just too many people to compete against to be heard in the throng. So what did they do? They left. Is Britannia facing a crisis? Or is this the dawn of a perfect era for those whose pioneering spirit led them through the tough times to the utopia they so desired? The book is not yet closed.



A little holiday cheer, spread by the man who evidently brings it. Champagne and other goodies were also handed out to active characters with a Happy Holidays message.

Alas, this *Town Crier* newspaper's a phony. The real *Town Crier*, the newspaper devoted to all things Ultima at www.owo.com, hasn't been updated since June. Why was it deemed necessary in the first place? Because living, vibrant worlds have stories that the masses want to hear; they have lives and activities to report on. And so why hasn't Britannia lived up to this? Because that world is wheezing. The heart's still beating, but it can't seem to get out of bed.

Once again, The Opponent feels the need to broach the subject of Origin's Ultima Online, reasserting the importance he feels this project has for the future of all online gaming. UO exhibits what he believes is the ideal game model for success: a fluid, responsive game engine that adjusts itself to players' actions, creating in the process a living, breathing world. The big question: Is it working?

The Opponent's spent a lot of time wandering the wilderness of Britannia—he's gone nowhere special, killed nothing of note, earned no reputation, completed no quests, been killed numerous times, and hasn't been on the receiving end of any special treatment, deeds of kindness, or other glad tidings. And despite all this, he's *still* having a ball.

Origin consistently patched the system, updated the servers, adjusted this, tweaked that, altered the other, and responded to many of the complaints. But it's evident to anyone who's played since the beginning that, as we enter early January, the population has dwindled.

The Opponent fervently believes that this is a good thing. The world, on all the servers he's adventured on, was just too damn full. It didn't give players a chance to try and work the system as it was designed. That's where the problems came in. The most appealing, fastest way to a quick buck was to kill other players. The Opponent abhors PKers

with a passion and would ban them, period. But that's not the way of the open, do-whatever-you-will world, and so the PKers profited and the role-players struggled.

In a smaller population—made up of those pioneers who've stuck through the tough times—there's a much greater opportunity to get involved in the world and to make your mark. In a recent visit, Bladesman spent the best part of three hours wandering the wilderness around Yew. He received a call for help from a real player, a wizard having problems shaking a snake. Bladesman responded by striking the first blow with his virgin axe. Eventually he ran—and lives to tell the tale.

Was that three-hour stint boring? Not at all. Bladesman had the world at his feet. His wits were keeping him alive (no hero should be killed by a snake). Bladesman has just written the first page of his book.

With many of the whiners, miscreants, and ne'er-do-wells gone, now's the time to discover what UO's Britannia really has to offer. Remember, it's a role-playing game, not a Quake clone. You work with people, interact, *communicate*.

This isn't to say that Britannia is gaming utopia, however. It still has its problems, bugs, exploitable quirks, and other vagaries that annoy paying customers. But if you assume that those sticking with it are people prepared to give it a go in the spirit intended, then surely the forecast for living fulfilling, active, adventurous lives on Britannia is good.

I'm sticking with it—even if I suffer another PK attack—because the concept and commitment of UO's creators and pioneers deserve support. Here endeth the lesson.

Blade and Bladesman can be found roaming the Pacific and Napa servers in search of fame and fortune. Still. Send comments to blade@pcgames.com or pcg_blade@webbullet.com.

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Capturing Gehn



A click-by-click trip through Riven

By Barry Brenesal

Riven is an enormous, complex graphic adventure that will occupy your mind and your PC. What follows is a terse, accurate walkthrough of the entire game. It doesn't tell you the whys and wherefores, and it doesn't dabble in Riven's rich story; it just tells you how to solve the mysteries of Riven's islands so that you can confront Gehn. If you want the ultimate easy road, grab our CD or go www.pcgames.com and get our saved games. Extract them to the Riven directory to hop to anywhere in this walkthrough. Oh, and if you think this guide is complex (it is), don't blame us; blame the Cyan development team for designing a wonderfully multilayered and intriguing adventure.



The inner chamber of the Gate Room rotates 72 degrees at a time.

The Gate Room on Temple Island

Location: The antechamber of a golden-domed room, up the steps to the right of the cage in which you arrived on Riven. Turn left at the top of the steps. For the purposes of this walkthrough, we consider this the Gate Room's main entrance.

Objective: It's effectively two rooms in one. The inner room has two doors. The outer shell has five walls, several with blocked doors. You need to realign the two rooms so that you can get through to important controls behind the various shell doors.

Solution: There's a button on the wall to the right of the Gate Room entrance. Press it four times. Turn around and go down the path on your left, following the steps down to the end. Turn left twice and you'll face a locked gate. Click along the bottom of the screen and you'll slide under it.

Follow the path and re-enter the Gate Room. Cross the room, go down the little path, and throw the steam-valve lever. (This is for a later puzzle involving the telescope.)



Open the Temple doors in the Imaging Chamber.

Head back toward the Gate Room, but don't go in.

Throw the lever at the left of the door. Push the rotation button at the right of the door twice.

Go to the huge door across the Gate Room and turn around. Throw the lever at the left of the Gate Room, then push the rotation button at the right of the door twice.

Cross the Gate Room to the main entrance. Turn around and hit the rotation button twice more. Now you finally have access to the golden-domed room behind the Gate Room. Whew.

The Great Golden Dome on Temple Island

Saved Game: Riv1

Location: Behind the Gate Room. You must solve the Gate Room Puzzle to get through to the Dome.

Objective: There are several levers in this area that must be thrown to repower and connect drawbridges.

Solution: Keep walking forward into the Dome and along the catwalk, which glides around the inside of the Dome to the left and out along the mountain. You'll notice a valve expelling steam. Throw the steam-valve lever to connect the Dome with Crater Island via the drawbridge.

Return to the main catwalk and continue along the mountainside. On the other side of the tunnel, throw the lever. Turn around and follow the catwalk back to the Dome's main entrance.

Stop before crossing the drawbridge leading back into the Gate Room. Throw the

lever. You'll see the bridge is now powered as it rises to a point above you. Throw the lever again and cross the bridge.

The Temple on Temple Island

Saved Game: Riv2

Location: Go past the Gate Room's main entrance and over the bridge.

Objective: Get to Jungle Island.

Solution: Walk through the dark mountain corridor and enter the Imaging Chamber to the left. Once inside, turn right and click on the face plate. It shows a view of the Temple

main entrance. To the left of the plate is a lever; throw it. The Temple doors will open.

Leave the Imaging Chamber. Turn left. At the end of the corridor is a stone door leading into the Temple. Use it. Turn right after entering the main Temple area and exit the building.

Before mounting the short flight of steps, press the blue sphere. This will call the tram.

Enter the tram. Move the knob on the left over to the right to rotate the carriage. Now throw the middle lever, and enjoy the ride.

The Giant Wahrk Idol on Jungle Island

Saved Game: Riv3

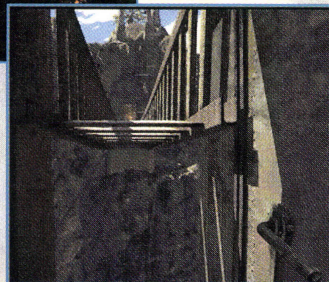
Location: When you leave the tram, continue across the landing and turn left. Proceed up the stairs—they take you through the mountain and out the other side. You will now be at an intersection with another set of stairs heading down to the left and up to the right. Go right.

Cross the rope bridge into the clear-cut region and go to the gate. Open it and enter. Proceed down the path through the second living-tree tunnel. Take the right branch and continue down all the way to the idol.

Objective: Stop the rotating Fire Marble Dome and close the planks under the Wahrk Gallows.

Solution: When you get as close as possible to the idol, turn around. Click on the top of the post to the left, where there's a somewhat concealed button. This opens the idol's mouth, revealing a flight of steps. Walk up them.

Inside, you'll find a wooden elevator, a lever that closes the mouth, and a tram call.



Flipping the steam valves powers the drawbridges.

Move the switch on the right up a notch. This engages the elevator, raising you a level above the idol's mouth.

You are now on a catwalk above the dense forest floor. Take the right branch, which leads to a kinetoscope focused on the revolving Fire Marble Dome. There's a button on top of the kinetoscope; press it when the symbol in the eyepiece flashes yellow. (If you have trouble catching this, just keep clicking the button quickly.) The Dome will stop rotating.

Now move back along the catwalk and turn right, taking that branch you neglected before. It leads to the Dome. Walk around it once to the right and look through the window. There's a book inside, with a slider combination below and a button release. You still need the combination, so turn around.

Go left, climb the stairs, and approach the building ahead of you. Go in the Wahrk Skull Throne and sit in the chair; hit the left lever to



The natives are hiding when you arrive at the village.

left around the spherical hut. Climb a second ladder and follow another catwalk to a small, Jules Verne-like submarine.

Throw the lever, lowering the submarine into the water. Turn around, retracing your steps. Pass the gate you entered and continue up the steps.

Stay on the path over the rope bridge. You'll find another fork in the mountain stairs. Previously you came from the left; now proceed down to the right. Soon you'll see the sunners braying at your presence. Follow this path as far as it will go, climb down the

ladders, and follow the short path to the metal-rung ladder. Climbing down puts you inside the lowered submarine.

Submarine at Jungle Island

Saved Game: Riv5

Location: In the sub.

Objective: Gain access to the Wahrk Gallows.

Solution: Turn the sub around, press the accelerator, and press it again once you stop. Look up, click on the hatch, and exit. Take the only available walkway to the ladders up the side of the cliff, and enter the Sub Access Control Room.

There, you'll find five levers. Throw the three that

are down into the up position to extend all the bridges for your sub's access.

Return to the sub. Turn it around. Go forward one crossing, then move the sliding lever to the left. Go forward one more crossing. Although it isn't mandatory for finishing the game, you can disembark here and enter the hut to observe a holograph of Gehn playing God and a numbers game that sacrifices Gehn's victims to hungry sea monsters.

Turn the sub around again, make sure the sliding lever is set left, and go forward twice. Exit the sub, and you're at the Wahrk Gallows.

Wahrk Gallows on Jungle Island

Saved Game: Riv6

Location: You're there.

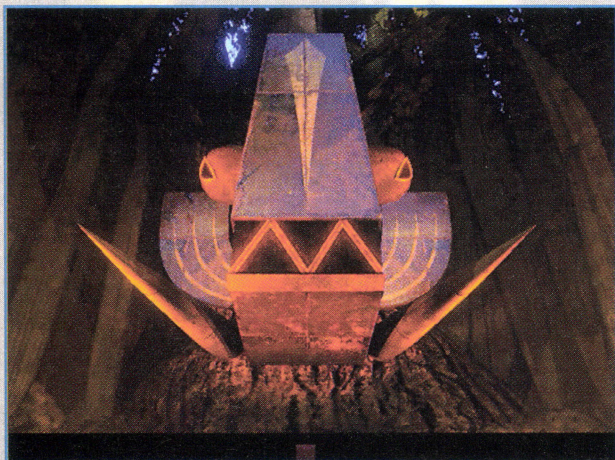
Objective: Mark the gateway to the Moiety Age and get to Crater Island.

Solution: Find the triangular handle dangling from a rope and pull it. When the bar descends, click on it to hoist yourself up to the top of the Gallows. Proceed across the walkway to a prison with a star-patterned door. There's a native inside. Click the switch to the right of the door. When you return, the prisoner will be gone.

Enter the cell. Click on the drainage grating, then the water within it. This will raise and turn a hidden key, recessing a portion of the cell wall. Keep clicking forward, although your screen will be dark for several turns.

You're now at a mountain entrance overlooking the lake. Click on the branch sticking out on the left to turn on the light. Return down the corridor until you see another branch directly in front of your face. Click

on it to turn on a second light. Move forward another space; click on the branch on the right for a third light. Move ahead again, and you'll be standing before an



There's an elevator inside this idol.

go up, the right lever to close the planks way below, and the left lever to return to the room.

Return to the elevator. Take it down one level. (There's a second level below the idol that leads to another tram.) Pull the lever that reopens the mouth of the idol and exit.

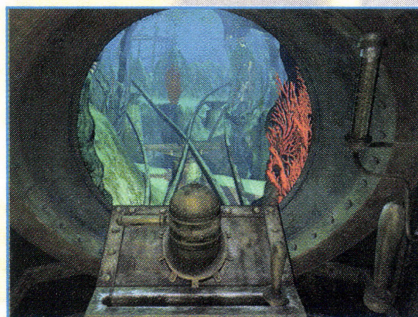
Native Village on Jungle Island

Saved Game: Riv4

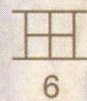
Location: As you leave the idol and continue along the path, a native child will run away from you. Follow her, taking the right branch at the fork. Climb the steps, go through the gate, then turn right onto the catwalk. Now you have a long walk to the cliff village.

Objective: Lower the one-person submarine into the water, then gain access.

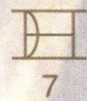
Solution: When you arrive at the village, climb the ladder. Take the walkway that winds to the



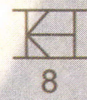
The bottom lever chooses the left or right track, the middle lever turns the sub around, and the right lever is power.



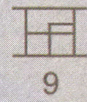
6



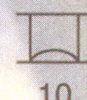
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8

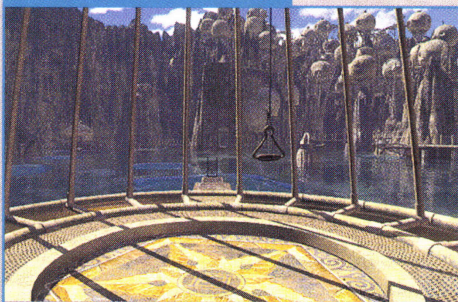


9



10

Gehn's site for executions.



open, man-made stone corridor with a door.

Move ahead one click and touch another light. Turn to the right. You'll now see a handle on the door you just passed. Pull the handle, and when the door to the first corridor closes, it will reveal a second. Enter the second corridor.

Move forward until you dead-end in the circular room with 25 stone pillars. Remember it—you'll return later to gain access to the Moiety Age.

Return down the dark passage, toward the door in the prison cell. The key in the bottom-right of the room right before the prison will reopen the secret passageway, allowing you entry.

Leave the prison. Turn right. Follow the catwalk. Go down the metal ladder, then turn around. Stay with this pathway until you come to the series of forks at the clear-

catwalk over the lake to the left. Take the catwalk. Move the lever one turn to the left. Go to the Boiler Room.

Climb the stairs and move around the catwalk to the controls on the outside of the Boiler. Turn right so that you're observing the face plate into the Boiler.

Throw the lever at the bottom, shutting off the heat. Move the large wheel crank on the left, emptying the tank. Turn left and throw the valve. Turn right and raise the switch in the upper-right portion of the screen. Move back

Objective: Stop another rotating Fire Marble Dome, plus gain access to Gehn's laboratory.

Solution: Go out past the double doors and onto the catwalk. Watch closely along the railing to the right for a lever; it's easy to miss. Throw it when you see it, shutting off the fans.

Continue along the catwalk past Gehn's lab and through the tunnel to Temple Island. Right before you reach the Great Golden Dome, throw the lever to the right. Continue forward after the drawbridge lowers.

Just before you get to the wheel inside the Dome, turn left and go to the outside catwalk.

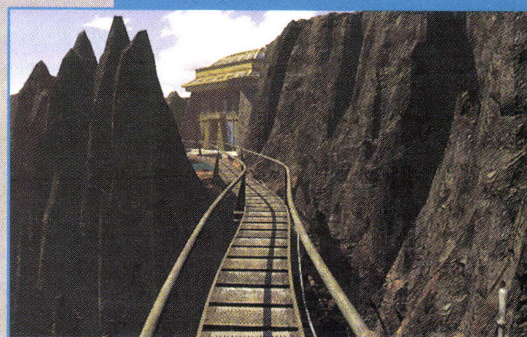
You'll see it's missing a piece. Turn around and flip the switch to complete the walkway. Follow that catwalk to its dead end and throw the lever. That clears the final barrier in the Gate Room.

Turn around and go back to the wheel inside the Great Golden Dome. Work the wheel to complete the catwalk. Take a left at the next juncture, and throw the lever on the right to raise the drawbridge.

Turn around and proceed left at the catwalk juncture, following it outside. Before you get to the mountain corridor, depress the small button to the right of the entrance. The catwalk section you're on will descend. Turn left and proceed to another kinetoscope. Click repeatedly to stop the spinning Fire Marble Dome.

Now retrace your steps and return to Crater Island. Go past Gehn's laboratory and re-enter the mountainside. When you get to the double doors, turn left. Stand in front of Gehn's frog-catching machine (we kid you not), look up into the fan duct, and click on it to enter. Shimmy through until you come to another fan; click on the grating, and you'll pop out in Gehn's laboratory.

The switch in the lower right-hand corner turns off the fans so that you can access Gehn's lab (straight ahead).



Get ready for some drain-delving.



toward the Boiler Room door and enter.

There's a drain in the center of the room. Enter it and click up 'til you're on a mountainside high above water.

Turn left and proceed down the faint trail. You'll climb over a railing onto a ledge outside a set of double doors. Open them, enter, then turn around and shut the doors, revealing a pair of passageways, one on either side. Take the left passageway. (If you have trouble accessing it, click on the handle to the left of the closed door.) Proceed down the stairs, click to open the door, and you'll find a Fire Marble Dome very much like the one you stopped on Jungle Island.

Turn around after you enter the Fire Marble Dome room and close the door. This reveals a hidden passage behind it. Take the passage to the end, and you'll discover another kinetoscope. Use the same procedure as before: click the button when the yellow image appears, stopping the Dome.

The Great Golden Dome on Temple Island

Saved Game: Riv8

Location: Starting in the Fire Marble Dome room.

Click the branch on the left for some light.



cut region. Go forward once, then turn around. Take the right branch at each of the two forks that lie ahead. Enter the tunnel and pull the handle for a ride in the logging car to Crater Island.

Boiler Room on Crater Island

Saved Game: Riv7

Location: Your starting point after the logging car arrives on Crater Island.

Objective: Stop another rotating Fire Marble Dome.

Solution: Turn left. There's the freestanding Boiler Room straight ahead, and a narrow

Gehn's Laboratory on Crater Island

Saved Game: Riv9

Location: You're there.

Objective: Learn the access code for the books locked within the Fire Marble Domes.

Solution: Read Gehn's log (the book with the Star cover). On page 13 is a five-digit code written in the native language. This code changes in every game, so we can't give it to you. The symbol-to-number translation appears on the left and right margins of these pages, so look at the log and translate the symbols into the corresponding numbers. Write this down, because it's critical to completing Riven. (If you're using our saved games, the code is 7, 11, 15, 20, 22.)

Press the blue sphere by one of the doors in the lab, but exit through the other door and follow the steps down to the awaiting tram. Hop in and ride to Plateau Island.

Plateau Island

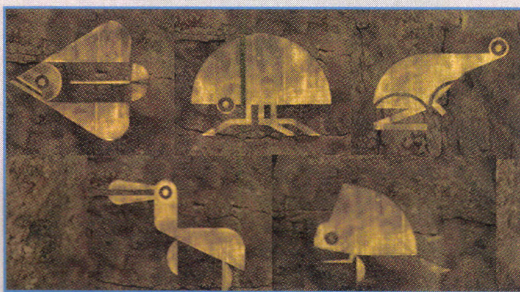
Saved Game: Riv10

Location: After you've left the tram.

Objective: Stop yet another spinning Fire Marble Dome.

Solution: Walk through the door frame, climb the steps, and follow the road to the elevator. Ascend a level, walk to the end of the catwalk, and glance down. You now see a representation of the five islands below, plus a panel of five buttons. Press the largest button, the one on the bottom right. You'll see water flow over an island, revealing its terrain. Turn around, walk back through the elevator, and check out the Map Room straight ahead. The same island is shown here. The goal of this puzzle is to figure out where each Dome is on each island for an upcoming Marble Puzzle. Play if you want, but we're moving right along!

One of Riven's toughest puzzles.



Fish, Beetle, Frog, Sunner, Wahrk.

Leave the map room and turn left. Follow the catwalk to a kinetoscope aimed at another Fire Marble Dome. It's out of alignment, so just keep pressing the button quickly until the Dome stops.

Retrace your steps back to the tram and turn it around. Leave it without throwing the power switch and go through the door ahead of you. Continue down the corridor, but before you reach the end, throw the yellow-striped lever on the left. This will raise and open an elevator, which you should enter.

Push the button to close the elevator and descend. Leave the elevator and walk down the winding corridor. Note that one of Gehn's scribes runs off to the left. Follow him. (You'll miss a wonderfully moody throne puzzle, but it only provides clues to answers we'll give later on.) Push the sphere to get the tram and take it back to Jungle Island.

The Giant Wahrk Idol on Jungle Island

Saved Game: Riv11

Location: You arrive one level below the main entrance of the Wahrk Idol you visited earlier.

Objective: Visit the Moiety Age and recover the Trap Book.

Solution: Exit the tram. Ride the elevator up a floor and exit the idol. Go toward the village until you see the ladder you lowered in your

first visit to the Wahrk Idol. Climb it, and take the secret passage in the prison to go to the room with 25 pillars.

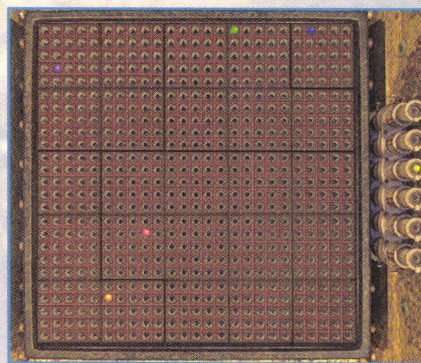
You have to touch five pillars in the correct order (Fish, Beetle, Frog, Sunner, Wahrk) to open the passage to the Moiety Age. The symbols can be a bit confusing, so here's how to find the right critters:

Turn around until you're facing the corridor from which you entered. Click on the seventh of the eight pillars, the Fish. Then click the second, the Beetle. Turn right, and click on the second full pillar, the Frog. Turn right twice more, and click on the first pillar, the Sunner. The screen shifts left. Click on the fourth of the seven pillars, the Wahrk. (The symbols

are pictured at left.)

The water on the wall ahead of you will drain away, revealing a ledge with a Link Book. Touch the open book on the ledge to walk through.

In the room behind you is a strange idol; approach it. You'll get shot with a blowgun dart by rebels and awaken first on a boat, then in a cell. Look out both windows, then face the table. Nelah will enter and give you Catherine's journal and the Trap Book you



The Marble Puzzle solved.

lost when you first arrived. Click on them to put them in your inventory. She'll then return with a Linking Book. Touch it to go back to the room with 25 pillars.

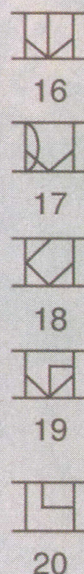
The Great Golden Dome; Temple Island

Saved Games: Riv12 (in the 25-stone room), Riv13 (outside the Temple)

Location: Take the tram back to Temple Island (not the tram below the idol but the one past the clear-cut area, over the rope bridge, and down the stairs).

Objective: Solve the Marble Puzzle.

Solution: Walk back through the Temple. On the other side of the Gate Room, the drawbridge you raised before will lead you to a slit high in the Great Golden Dome. Go to the Marble Puzzle and place the marbles as in the screenshot above. Move back one square, flick the switch, and press the button



Play your cards like an XPERT

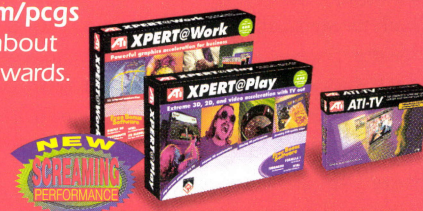
and you'll win every time.

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3D Performance Comparison - ZD 3D Winbench98

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| ATI XPERT@PLAY | 552 |
| Diamond Viper 330 | 438 |
| Diamond Monster 3D | 385 |
| Hercules Stingray 128 | 375 |
| Matrox Mystique 220 | 90.8 |
| Matrox Millenium II | 88.5 |
| Creative Labs Graphics Blaster | 72.2 |

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it reveals. If you don't hear a muffled explosion, you haven't succeeded—try again. If you do, the Linking Books in the Fire Marble Domes are revealed.

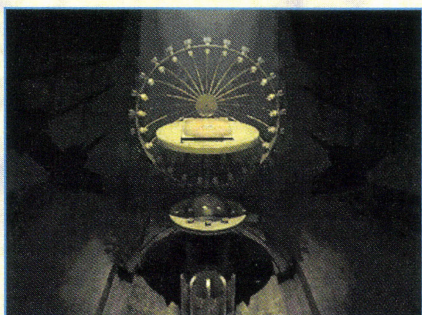
Getting to Gehn's World

Saved Game: Riv14

Location: Go back to the entrance of the Gate Room.

Objective: Confront Gehn, at last!

Solution: Press the button to the right of the Gate Room entrance three times. Walk through the room and take the catwalk into the Great Golden Dome. Turn left and follow the catwalk down the stairs and outside the Dome. Stop before you enter a mountainous passageway, turn right, and press the button. As before, the walkway will go down one flight. Follow the path to the Fire Marble Dome.



Let your fingers do the walking.

Enter the combination (move the fifth slider to the fifth number, the fourth slider to the fourth number, etc.) you got from Gehn's log and push the button. The book will rise. Open it and touch the scene.

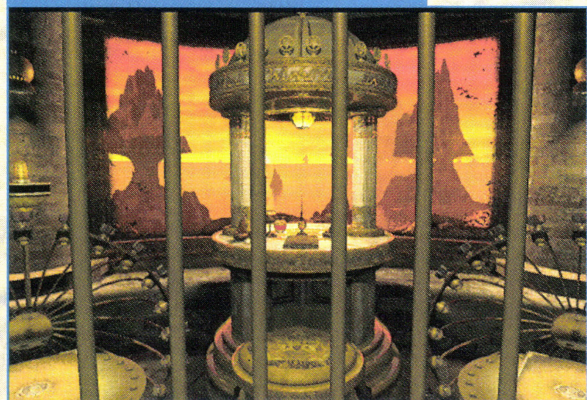
A Conversation with Gehn

Saved Game: Riv15

Location: Where you are.

Objective: Trap Gehn (yes!) and link to Catherine.

Gehn will soon be on his way.



Solution: Turn around in your cage until you see a button on a lock between the bars. Press it. Gehn will arrive. After a long and beautifully performed speech, he'll take your Trap Book, examine it, and ask you to try it first. Don't refuse him—touch the book. You'll be locked inside a black prison. Reassured, he'll then touch the book, exchanging places with you.

Look for the giant power-sphere and move the switch below it to the right, providing power to all the Linking Books in the room. Throw a lever next to one of the windows, lowering the bars of your former cage.

Take the tunnel ladder leading down to Gehn's bedroom. Click on the small gray sphere on the night table. Note the succession



The last of Riven's Islands, Catherine's prison.

of five sounds carefully: they're the code to Catherine's prison, and they change every game.

Climb the ladder again. Enter the cage area and find the book with the single square on the cover. Use it to link to Catherine.

Catherine's Prison Island

Saved Game: Riv16

Location: The Fire Marble Dome on the Prison Island.

Objective: Free Catherine and return to Gehn's residence.

Solution: Press the button to the right of the book on the floor. Turn around and follow the catwalk into Catherine's prison. At the



Close this portal and Riven is destroyed.

end, you'll see a pullcord, a lever, and the keys. Try out the keys, enter the sequence you heard in the gray sphere (in this saved game, press levers 2, 3, 1, 3, 3), and flip the lever.

After a video sequence, you'll need to return to Gehn's Island. Since Catherine used the Link Book, the Fire Marble Dome is spinning again. Use the kinetoscope to stop it, then enter the same combination you used before (again, in this saved game, the combo is 7, 11, 15, 20, 22). Push the button and touch the book to link.

The Telescope on Temple Island

Saved Game: Riv17

Location: Back in the cage at Gehn's residence.

Objective: Destroy Riven while Catherine saves the inhabitants.

Solution: Look around the cage for the book that has two squares on the top row and three squares on the bottom row. Link to it. This puts you back on Temple Island.

Follow the catwalks all the way through the Great Golden Dome, turn right at the main Gate Room entrance, and return to the spot where you started your journey. Approach the telescope and enter the five-digit combination from Catherine's journal page (it's 27 clicks into the journal; in this walkthrough, the combo is 2, 3, 1, 3, 1). Pull the handle to open the hatch. Flip the pin blocking the telescope's descent by clicking on its support on the telescope's left leg. Pull the lever down on the right of the telescope and click the button in the handle. The scope should start descending. Click the button until the glass breaks.

Get ready for the final video sequence—and congratulations. The Age of Riven is closed forever!



21



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25

The X-Files— First Look

By Daniel Morris

Our field agent gets inside Fox Interactive for the industry's first glimpse of the X-Files game. Keep your eyes open, have your cell phone and torch handy, and trust no one—especially the marketing people.

LOS ANGELES
1:53 p.m.

My cell phone rings. I hold it to my ear. "Morris."

"It's me," my editor says, his voice lowered and serious.

"The other guys are still on the runway at the airport.

I guess there's a big storm down there in L.A."

A roll of thunder rattles my apartment. "Yeah," I tell him.

"It came out of nowhere."

"Well, you'll have to go in alone, and hopefully they'll meet up with you later."

I fold away the cell phone and my brow furrows.

Just a coincidence. To think otherwise would be paranoid, right?

On the day *PC Games* is to get the gaming industry's first look at The X-Files—the all-video adventure game being designed by Fox Interactive with the participation of David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, and a who's-who of the TV series' cast and creative crew—a nasty thunderstorm hits perpetually sunny Los Angeles.



Mulder and Scully doing what they do best—getting into trouble.



These are the goons who try to perforate Mulder and Scully in the opening cut-scene.

Ominous thunder booms as lightning rips the gray sky. The editors I was supposed to pick up at the airport are still on the runway in San Francisco, awaiting clearance to head for L.A. I'm going to be sent in alone to infiltrate the closely guarded corridors of Fox Interactive.

Just a coincidence. Right? No puppet masters involved in this.

I'm led to the secret chamber where Fox Interactive's mad scientists conspire with the creators of Chris Carter's Emmy-winning TV series to produce what they hope will be the defining game of a new genre.

My Deep Throat inside Fox Interactive is Paul Provenzano, the group's executive director of product development and a serious X-Phile with something important to say.

"FMV is a ghetto," he begins—a very reassuring thing to hear from the guy in charge of an FMV *X-Files* game. "It's always been poorly written, poorly acted, and poorly shot. We're working with writers from the show, the stars of the show, and the director of photography of the show. This is going to be an all-video game in a class of its own."

It's hard to quibble about the names. David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, arguably the most worshipped performers on the small screen at the moment, assume their roles as agents Mulder and Scully for an original story conceived by series producer/writer Frank Spotnitz. Greg Roach, whose brilliant photography has much to do with the series' success, lensed the interactive shoot.

"Astounding resources were brought to bear on this project," notes marketing head Scott Marcus. "It was a seven-week shoot running simultaneously with production on the series and filming on the feature

[to be released later this year on the big screen]. Our first day of shooting was actually on Easter Sunday."

Getting the green light for the project was a matter both simple and daunting—it was pitched to Chris Carter, who basically said, "If you can get David and Gillian on board, then I'm on board."

Fox Interactive created a mock-up—an interactive game filmed with temporary actors—designed to show off the quality

the video-adventure designers knew they could achieve. The series people were impressed, and the game went forward with the full cooperation and participation of the show's cast and crew.

Enter the *X-Files* World

The game begins with a teaser opening, as Mulder and Scully break into a secluded warehouse and are ambushed and fired upon by gun-toting spooks. A sudden and frightening burst of white light floods the warehouse, and as Mulder and Scully hide behind a crate, the sounds of the screaming shooters fill the air. Mulder peeks over the crate, gun extended, and his eyes lock onto—

Cut to the familiar and cherished series intro, reproduced exactly as it is on the TV show, grainy footage and all. Then you're the star.

You play Craig Willmore, a junior field agent with the Seattle bureau of the FBI. The interactivity of the game engine is quickly demonstrated in your first chit-chat with a colleague, where you're given the option of responding to pointed queries by acting calm, angry, or paranoid. Your choices, made on the fly via icons beneath the wide-screen picture, change the tone of the scene as it plays out—if you get defensive, you'll put your colleague back on his heels. As the game develops, there will be instances when calm interaction with characters is of utmost importance, and other times when terseness—and good old-fashioned distrust—are going to be needed.

You meet up with the field director and are introduced to Assistant Director Skinner—trusty bald-pated Mitch Pileggi. It's here that it first

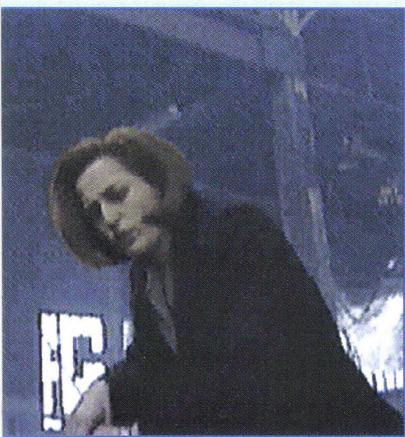


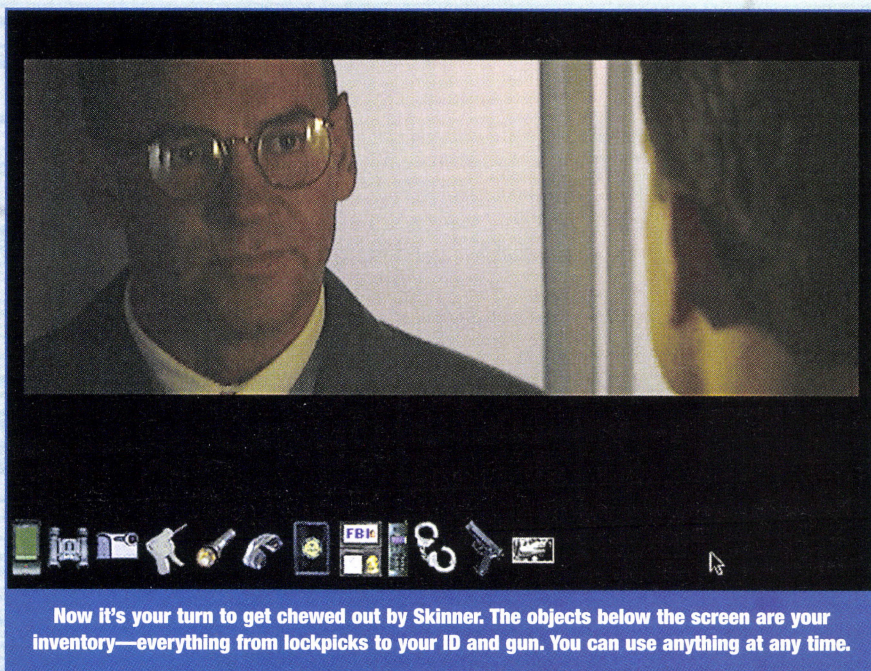
Your attitude in conversation—calm, terse, or paranoid, represented by the three large icons under the screen—will directly affect the course of your conversations with other characters.

sinks in: this ain't last year's FMV game. You're interacting with the *real deal*, and your choices of dialogue branches induce responses from A-list performers. You're immediately sucked into that particularly eerie and convincing realm that X-Philes relish; and it's made all the better by the fact that it's now your turn to dip into its mysteries.

The plot is still a closely held secret (believe me, I asked and asked, but that lid just isn't coming off), but I did discern that the jumping-in point for the adventure is the disappearance of Mulder and Scully. Skinner is out in Seattle because he's worried about his favorite agents. They've been gone for four days, and their last-known whereabouts is a motel outside of Seattle. (Incidentally, the game was shot on location in the Seattle area, a quick hop south from the show's usual Vancouver stomping grounds.)

Just in case you're harrumphing, Duchovny and Anderson are far from afterthoughts to the action. You track down Mulder and Scully before too long, and then the mystery really swings into full gear. You'll get the sublime opportunity to break into restricted areas with Fox Mulder and perform autopsies with Dana Scully. Ooh, yeah.





The bag of tricks seems to have no bottom. Teleconference with the Lone Gunmen to get their ideas on what's happening. Bag evidence and analyze it for some obscure clues. Interact with such bygone luminaries as Mister X (the game is set between the third and fourth seasons of the show, so he's still very much alive). You might even catch a whiff of smoke from a certain carcinogen-packed overseer who's in the game because he feels what he's doing is right.

Ambiance and AI

All of the action unfolds in gorgeously captured footage taken by the series' cinematographer, and the TV show's creepy ambiance seeps into the game's every frame. Event-sensitive music (including tracks from series maestro Mark

Snow) lends atmosphere, as do the game's many in-joke rewards for the show's devotees. For example, fans will know they've found Mulder's motel room when they find an empty bottle of vodka and a copy of Jose Chung's *From Outer Space* on the nightstand.

The engine's AI will help close the gulf between hardcore gamers and less game-savvy fans. If you're getting way off track, you'll be subtly guided in the right direction. If you're making fast headway, someone or something will be bound to throw you off course. And you'd better remember to treat the game world like the real world—try to slap handcuffs on a civilian or draw your gun for no reason, and it's Game Over. You'll be relieved of your badge with no questions asked.

For their part, the series' stars were very enthusiastic about their work on the game. "Gillian even offered to volunteer extra time," Provenzano says, "so we wrote some extra stuff for her. And David is incredibly sharp; he was always offering, 'Do you guys want this? Shouldn't we do this?,' thinking through the branches of the game."

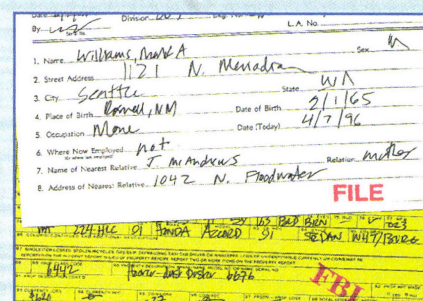
The series' creators paid the project a major compliment when they arranged for a special episode based

almost entirely around Skinner—expressly, the game's developers say, for the purpose of allowing Duchovny and Anderson time off to work on the interactive project.

"That episode," says Provenzano, "was written for us."

Another fortunate break came from an unusual source. After neo-Nazis hacked the Web site created by developer Hyperbole Studios, the real-life FBI was called in to investigate. One agent, a devoted fan of the show, heard about the game and donated authentic FBI folders and memoranda for use on the shoot. As a result, all the peripheral FBI gear you handle is the actual stuff.

Fox isn't giving any details on the budget, but *The X-Files* will clearly be among the most ambitious games ever created—there are about 30 locations ranging from the FBI office to morgues, motels, businesses, residences, labs, and, oh yeah, a warehouse, each containing numerous areas of their own to explore. (Many of the locations were on the sprawling expanse of a decommissioned Navy base near Seattle.) Fox's commitment to the game is total—right down to the foreign-market voices of Mulder and Scully, which will be dubbed by the actors who dub for the TV series in their respective nations.



A lucky score from a real FBI agent helped the design team lend an air of authenticity to all of the game's documents.

It was, all in all, an impressive glimpse into a huge and exciting undertaking. Fans of the show can now rest assured that their first chance to take part in the *X-Files* universe was made possible by the show's own miracle workers.

I'm still nervous, though. My delayed colleagues are shown in just as the demonstration wraps up, and most of the evidence is already whisked off to an even deeper corner of the tower. Just like one of Mulder's corpses—there one second, gone as soon as someone else wants a look.

THE X-FILES

DEVELOPER: Hyperbole Studios
PUBLISHER: Fox Interactive
WEB: www.fox.com
AVAILABLE: Summer 1998



Where would a field agent be without his trusty cell phone? Manipulatable items include an Apple PDA, which you can use to send and receive email within the game.

X-Files: Unrestricted Access

Been searching for the elusive X-Files multimedia treasury? Fox now gives you Unrestricted Access. The truth is on these two discs.

By Daniel Morris

There are few breeds of pop-culture devotees with as obsessive a fixation as *X-Files* nuts. X-Philes, among whom I must count myself a slobbering member, are well-known for their religious zeal in pursuit of a finer appreciation of Chris Carter's vision.

Scouring the Internet for clues into the obscure titles of each episode. Backtracking through personal notes to find the buried interconnections between mythology episodes. Always documenting, cataloguing, and endlessly replaying VCR tapes, pondering the significance of each wisp of Cancer Man's smoking butts.

Fox Interactive has now unveiled the long-awaited multimedia treasury of *X-Files* lore, *The X-Files: Unrestricted Access*. Its ambition is to be a one-stop shop for every bit of marginalia you need relating to the TV show.

In this two-disc set, you'll find a complete roster of characters, both important and obscure. There are complete dossiers and video clips for major players like Mulder, Scully, Skinner, Mister X, and the like.

Packaged with Internet Explorer 4.0, *Unrestricted Access* is clearly influenced by and designed around the Web. In fact, future episodes not included on the CD (episodes up to the end of the fourth season are included)

will be covered for free on Fox's Web site. In addition, the browser-style interface has been used to link to other *X-Files* chat areas and sites on the Web, making a fairly seamless transition between the CD-based content and the tons of other info floating around on the Internet.

Each of its areas, dossiers, and so on hyperlinks to other parts of the compilation. Following these threads wherever they lead can be an absorbing experience. You might start with a simple search for Bambi—not for any particular reason, y'know, just hoping for a glimpse of the beautiful-and-brainy Dr. Berenbaum who played doctor with Mulder (much to Scully's chagrin) in Darin Morgan's classic "War of the Coprophages." Or you might call up a list of all the Technological Nightmares that have reared their heads in various episodes and then scour the case files for conspiratorial connections

between them (at least until the subliminal messages on your computer monitor urge you to nastiness).

Every episode is catalogued with a case file, links, pics, and notable points that can lead you off to explore side streets of the *X-Files* experience. A particularly fun exercise was to chronologically trace the evolving loyalties of Mister X from his first appearance to his "death." (I know you're still out there, X,

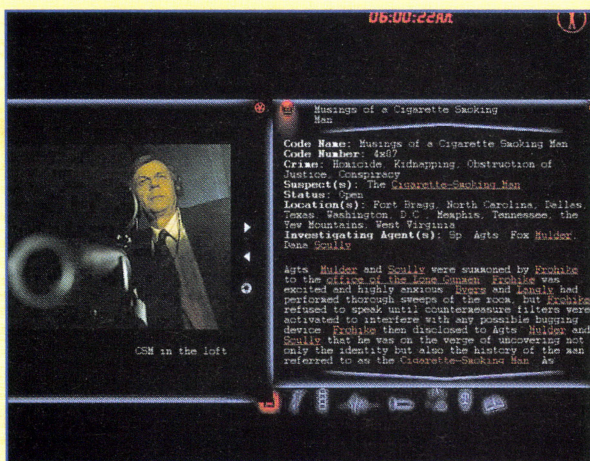
because I've figured out that—oh, what would be the fun of spoiling things?)



Play a large selection of series clips and laugh at Scully's endless parade of "plausible explanations."

Other features allow you to adopt *X-Files* screen savers (I've settled on a photo of Mulder's office, replete with "I Want to Believe" poster), set up series "quick facts" to pop up on your desktop, and hit the relevant Web info to push your exploration of the series out onto the big bad Internet.

Multimedia compendiums like this one have traditionally received a bad rap and short shrift from gamers, but my hunch is that *The X-Files* occupies such a hallowed place at the table of many enthusiasts that this CD-ROM set will find a home on many gamers' shelves. Just be sure to check your bedroom window—if you get too close to the truth, a cigarette-smoking man may have you lined up in his sights from across the street. And you just know they'd find a way to have it ruled a suicide, dontcha? Sleep tight.



The business end of Cancer Man's peacemaker. For when you really need to smoke someone.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| PUBLISHER: | Fox Interactive 800-369-0031 www.foxinter active.com |
| WEB: | |
| PLATFORM: | Win 95 CD |
| REQUIRES: | Pentium, 16MB RAM, 60MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive |
| RECOMMENDED: | P90, 100MB HD, 6x CD-ROM drive, Net access |
| STREET PRICE: | \$35 |



B
OVERALL

Quake III

Doom III (and a half)

By Rob Smith

I remember the first time. It's an event that will always live with me. That special moment when you suddenly realize that you're doing something *different*. My partner in this momentous experience was Doom. More specifically, it was an Imp. Its subtle, curdling breathing had gotten me up-tight to begin with. I was already questioning my performance. "Relax," I thought, but panic was creeping down my spine. Suddenly it appeared right in front of me, its grimacing visage filling the screen and causing me to jump back with a cry.



You're dead.

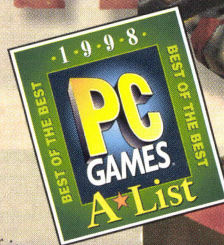
Boy, was I glad no one was witnessing this encounter, so that the embarrassment would never come back to haunt me. It's supposed to be less scary after the first time—and it has been. But the haunting memories of that fumbling rendezvous were brought startlingly back to life recently. The culprit? A Mutant in Quake II. It made me jump a mile—and I was delighted.

id Software made a point of assuring everyone that Quake II would return to some of the roots that made Doom such a hit. So monsters emerge from behind hidden walls as you walk into a trap, and there's been a definite effort to capture the claustrophobic intensity conveyed by Doom's level design.

After the furor over the Quake backstory, or lack of it, the sequel comes armed not only with a cohesive plot to blur the edges of another dungeon crawl, but also a (rather poor) cinematic intro. Frankly, I don't need a reason to be there, I just want to recapture that immersive feel. Shoot stuff, be shot at, but ultimately prevail—that's Quake to me.

But since id made the effort, here's the story: A marine who crash-lands alone on the cyborg Stroggs' home planet, you're on a mission to give them some payback, as they've been doing a pretty impressive job of carving up Earth. They arrived through some black-hole jobbies and are now going to be on the receiving end of a futuristic marine arse-kicking. They even have purpose: As a cyborg race, they're after human parts to supply extra appendages for their growing species. The Makron is their boss, and his head on a platter is your ultimate objective.

This goal makes it necessary for you to traverse eight interconnected units (37 maps total) of Stroggos, where you begin by establishing a comm link with your buddies in space. This then allows you to be fed info on the job at hand: what keys need to be collected, where the data CDs are found and need to be placed, where to locate other areas. It's a familiar package of searching, clicking buttons, and pulling levers—disguised as story. Fortunately, the disjointed, linear level construction of Quake has been ditched in favor of these hub-based units.

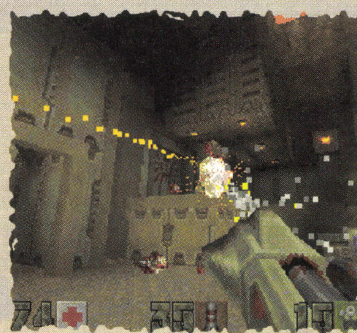


Get the guy with his finger on the trigger. Pity you can't jump in his seat.

While Quake II's level design fails to capture the scale and grandeur that makes Jedi Knight such an exploratory marvel, the levels are still inventive, detailed, and enticing enough to ensure you'll want to see what's next. In the Torture Chamber, for example, you'll see captured marines squished, fried, and minced in a variety of rooms. The perfect twist here is that because you press every button, shoot every light, and throw every lever you find, some of them trigger devices that send the marines to a sickly death—evil and delightful.

Of course, the critters and what you kill them with are the most important elements. The game's greatest achievement may be its weapon balance: it's nearly perfect. The list consists of the basic blaster, two types of Shotgun, the Machine Gun,

Chaingun, Grenade and Rocket Launchers (all this sound familiar so far?), HyperBlaster, Railgun, and finally, the return of the BFG. Not only do these instruments of destruction look the part (not inflated blowguns), but they're balanced to give each a definite purpose, advantage, and use in a variety of situations. The Rocket Launcher is not god.



Even in 320-by-200, the look is pretty spectacular (but with 3D acceleration, you get to see the enemies before they shoot).

The effect this has on game balance is enormous. You'll use the full range of weapons, once you learn which are most effective against certain critter types. As for the critters, the cyborg backstory has supplied the basis for their venom and attack options.

Once you're past the basic grunts, most creatures (like the Tanks, Iron Maidens, and Gladiators) have more than one attack option, keeping you guessing and making you assess tactics at each encounter. Now here's a surprise: Tactics are actually needed.

Unfortunately, little work has been done on any type of advanced monster AI. They're still ammo fodder, although some do duck (quite effectively) on occasion. If



Jedi Knight, Myth, and now Quake II, how many more reasons do you need to get a 3D card?)

In accelerated glory, the environments buzz with atmosphere. Instantly, the streaming light of your basic blaster grabs the senses. Fire it in a darkened area, and the shadows disperse in a shower of colored lights.

That atmosphere is enhanced with a sound-track that bears a strong resemblance to Trent Reznor's contribution to the original. The ambient sounds of buzzing machines, growling cyborgs, and flickering lights work effectively, and the music maintains that futuristic industrial-techno feel.

At least the AI disappointment is moot in the multiplayer game, which will surely dominate the Internet over the coming year. Support for 32 players is a great start, but what happened to the multiplayer-specific maps? Evidently id's professed "release when it's finished" policy became a disappointing "release in time for Christmas." Also, the Internet multiplayer code for the initial release had problems that were being patched at press time. While legions of amateur Quake II fanatics will be churning out their own maps, it would've been nice if id had managed to finish the multiplayer component of the game before release. id is working on Capture the Flag support and deathmatch maps that will be posted when finished—but they're not yet.

Mutants leap with terrifying speed, so don't be fooled when they pause in the distance.



Stand to attention, marine. Show off in deathmatches by selecting one of the set poses (press H, J, K or L), which include flipping off opponents, pointing, and others.

Despite these gaps, Quake II still manages to recall those initial first-person-action emotions. On the surface, it's a tremendous single-player experience with fantastic balance, inventive creatures, and astonishing looks. Below the surface, it really is Doom III and a half—and that's not a bad thing. The most anticipated game of the year lives up to its billing. Ion Storm, 3D Realms, Epic MegaGames, and all the others have their work cut out to come close to the simple gameplay and fantastic first-person-shooter experience Quake II offers.

QUAKE II

GAMEPLAY: **A-**
GETTING STARTED: **A**
GRAPHICS: **B**
3D ACCELERATED: **A**
SOUND CHECK: **B**

A-
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **C**

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PUBLISHER: Activision
800-477-3650
WEB: www.activision.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 25MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P166, 32MB RAM, 440MB HD, 3Dfx or PowerVR PCX2 graphics, three-button mouse
STREET PRICE: \$40

TIPS Find your way to the three secret levels:
▼ Unit 1: Comm Center—Jump into the puddle, go to the bottom. There's a passage in one corner that's fairly well disguised. Go through to find the Lost Station. ▼ Unit 5: Factory Unit—When you get to the waterfall, there's a way to get behind it. A rocket jump should do the trick, and there's the entrance to Sudden Death. ▼ Unit 7: Hangar Unit—Find the secret after shooting out the underwater propeller. Through that room, there's another room with a large cylinder. The door opposite leads to the Comm Satellite.

Be careful flicking switches: you may set off a torture device.

something in Quake II really needs work, AI is it. The critters are a challenge because of their number and firepower, not their inventive tactics or concept of self-preservation (why don't they pick up health packs when wounded)? The baddies' pathfinding abilities are improved, however: they will actually follow you up stairs and around corners—and sometimes they'll even run off and try to find a way to come up behind you.

Technology has played a significant role in making Quake II the awe-inspiring achievement that it is. But that's primarily an aesthetic concern (an increasingly important issue, it appears). It natively supports OpenGL, 3Dfx GL, and PowerVR cards for one of the most visually striking games ever. Even driven by software only, in 320-by-200, the game's pixelation provides a suitably gritty, eminently playable experience. (But come on: between

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Multiplayer Mayhem

By Willem "TheWeasel" Knibbe

Quake II—despite spotty Internet code on its initial release—is the best first-person-shooter multiplayer experience available. There are hundreds of free servers up and running on the Internet, and at the time of this writing, Mplayer supports Quake II, and TEN and HEAT plan to.

If you want to frag with the best in Quake II, it's essential you know the tools at your dis-



Shotgun

RF: ~1/sec

Pain: Up to 48



You can fire about one shot per second with this weapon, and each shot consists of 12 pellets that do 4 damage each. So if you're right on top of someone, blast 'em to do 48 damage. If they're way across a large room, you could do as little as 4 damage—the greater the distance, the more the pellets spread, so fewer connect.

Super Shotgun

RF: ~1/sec

Pain: Up to 120

Boom! When used up close, this weapon is as powerful as the original Quake's Rocket Launcher. A shot uses two shells and consists of 20 pellets; each can do 6 damage. Again, the greater the dis-



The vicious green ball smites all...

posal. We figure you understand the basics—keep moving (unless you're Snipe), get armor and a weapon, and find the Quad (4x damage for 30 seconds) and Invincibility (invulnerability for 30 seconds). But did you know that a Super Shotgun blast to the face does 120 points damage? We didn't think so.

Tools of Destruction

Quake II's weapons are much more balanced than in the original. Hey, you can actually frag folks when you don't have the Rocket Launcher! The following info—each weapon's Rate of Fire (RF) and Pain Inflicted—will help you choose which one to use in a given situation. A caveat: The "Pain" numbers are measured against a person wearing no armor.

Blaster

RF: 2/sec

Pain: 15



id turned up the little popgun's damage by five points for multiplay. This is obviously the weakest weapon, but it beats chasing folks around with an axe.

tance, the more the buckshot spreads, and the less damage you'll do. Fire when you see the whites of their eyes.

Machine Gun

RF: 10/sec

Pain: 8

Control the slight kick of this weapon (aim slightly low as you start to fire), and you can take out your foes quickly.

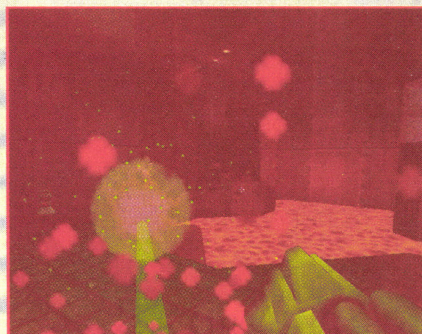
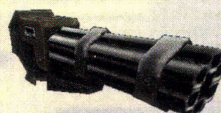


Chaingun

RF: ~29/sec

Pain: 6

id turned down the multiplayer damage for this one (in single-player, it does 8 per bullet). The RF is approximate, as the Chaingun takes



...including you, when you're not careful.

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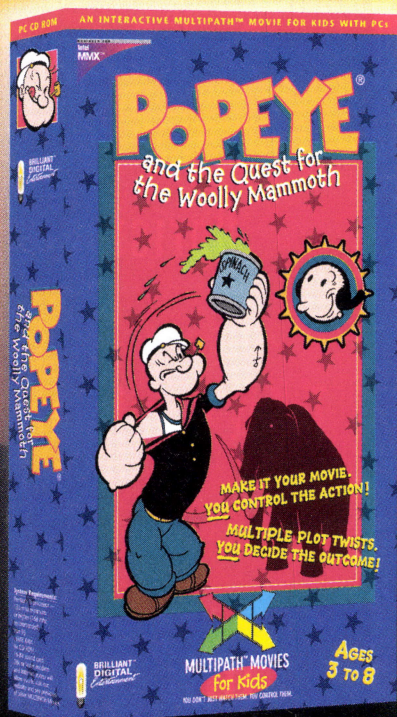
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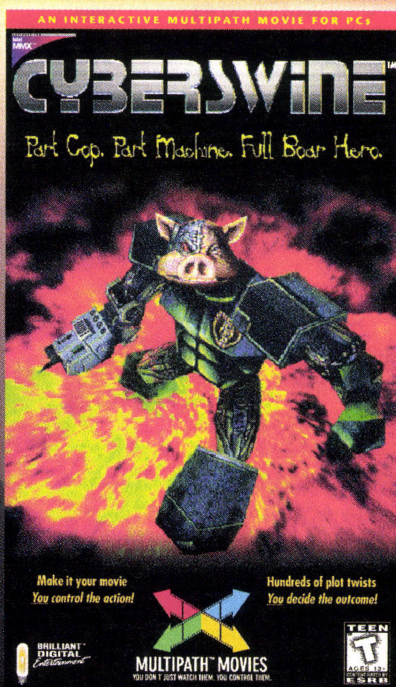
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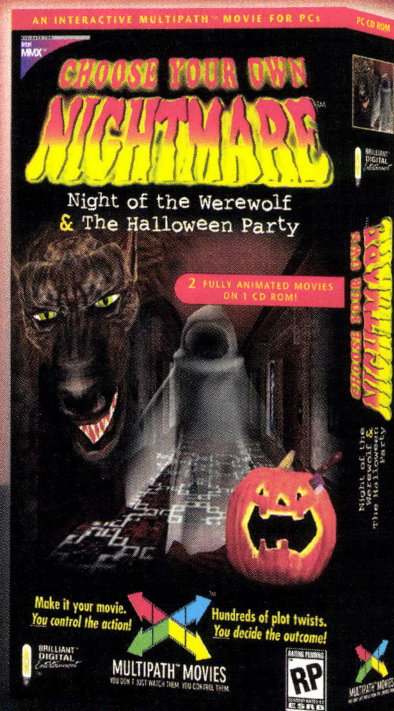
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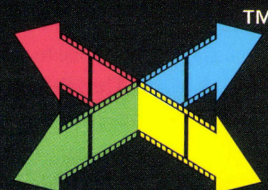
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time to get into full gear—it starts at about 10 per second, then accelerates to 20, then hits full stride and pumps out about 30. Youch! Take your finger off the trigger just before you run out of bullets—the barrels continue to spin while you release fire.

Thrown Grenade

RF: 0.5/sec

Pain: Up to 165

These deadly explosives can clear a room quickly—just remember to throw the thing within three seconds once you've activated it (the longer you hold fire, the farther you toss it) and anticipate, because it won't detonate for three seconds. While it can do up to 165 damage, it's usually more in the 120 range. Use it when you're fleeing an enemy or in a crowded room.



Grenade Launcher

RF: ~1 sec

Pain: Up to 160

Don't hurt yourself with this thing—it's most definitely not an up-close weapon. Again, while it can do up to 160 damage, it's usually more in the 110 range. It also has about a three-second delay before the Grenade detonates.



Rocket Launcher

RF: 1.2/sec

Pain: Up to 120

You gotta love the mushroom-cloud explosions and the damage this old favorite dishes out. The rockets travel more slowly than they did in Quake, though, making them easier to dodge. While this is still a very effective weapon, the great weapons-balance means it's no longer the undisputed king.



HyperBlaster

RF: 10/sec

Pain: 20

Line 'em up and mow 'em down! The HyperBlaster is the weapon of choice, partly because you don't have to worry about self-damage. Once it's rolling through those cells full bore, you can frag an unarmored foe in just half a second.



Railgun

RF: 0.7/sec

Pain: 100

It's a bit slow and requires precise aim, but this slug-firing



beast frags 'em fast, even though it reduced the damage from 150 to 100 for multiplayer. Ignore the beautiful blue spiral trail—it doesn't do any damage. The key is to have the target in your sight the moment you fire. A great use for the Railgun is when you're chasing someone. People tend to run in a straight line, making them easy to line up for the one-shot blast.

BFG

RF: 0.5/sec

Pain: Up to 500

Woo! The return of the BFG is wonderful! It takes two seconds to get a shot off, the kick is monstrous, and each shot requires 50 cells. But the BFG spells doom for your foes in three ways: The green lasers do some damage, there's radius damage from the explosion, and then there's the detonation. It's the last that gets you the gibs. For the detonation to be effective, you must see your target(s) and the green ball—it's triangulation. One way to get an early detonation—cutting down escape time—is to fire at the floor or ceiling. For a guaranteed gib, shoot 'em directly. The only way they can survive a direct BFG blast is by being invulnerable.



The Super Shotgun can deal up to 120 damage points in one shot.

Pain Savers

The armor in Quake II offers various levels of protection against energy weapons (Blaster, HyperBlaster, and BFG) and normal weapons. Note that if you have a strong armor type, picking up weaker armor types will replenish the stronger armor (e.g., if you have body armor and pick up jacket armor, you'll get more body armor). The power screen and shield can be used at the same time as regular armor for super protection—just don't run out of cells to power them. The "Strength" stat below shows the amount you get when you first pick up the armor and the maximum amount you can carry (shards allow you to carry more). The "Protection" stat shows how much damage the armor absorbs. Armor points are weakened by the amount of damage points absorbed; so while an up-close Super

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Shotgun blast normally does 120 damage, having 50 points of jacket armor means you'll lose 80 health and 40 armor points instead.

Jacket Armor

Strength/Max: 25/50

Protection: 33 percent
against normal, 0
percent against energy



Combat Armor

Strength/Max: 50/100

Protection: 66 percent
against normal, 33
percent against energy



Body Armor

Strength/Max: 100/200

Protection: 80 percent
against normal, 66
percent against energy



Power Screen

Strength/Max: 25/50

Protection: 33 percent from
all frontal attacks (uses
one cell per damage
point saved)



Power Shield

Strength/Max: 25/50

Protection: 66 percent from
all attacks (uses one cell per
2 damage points saved)



| Server # | hostname | addr | ping | map | time out | players | score | mode |
|----------|---------------|---------------|------|-------|----------|---------|-------|------|
| 1 | 192.168.1.100 | 192.168.1.100 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 2 | 192.168.1.101 | 192.168.1.101 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 3 | 192.168.1.102 | 192.168.1.102 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 | 192.168.1.103 | 192.168.1.103 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 | 192.168.1.104 | 192.168.1.104 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 6 | 192.168.1.105 | 192.168.1.105 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 7 | 192.168.1.106 | 192.168.1.106 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 8 | 192.168.1.107 | 192.168.1.107 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 9 | 192.168.1.108 | 192.168.1.108 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 10 | 192.168.1.109 | 192.168.1.109 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 11 | 192.168.1.110 | 192.168.1.110 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 12 | 192.168.1.111 | 192.168.1.111 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 13 | 192.168.1.112 | 192.168.1.112 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 14 | 192.168.1.113 | 192.168.1.113 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 15 | 192.168.1.114 | 192.168.1.114 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 16 | 192.168.1.115 | 192.168.1.115 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 17 | 192.168.1.116 | 192.168.1.116 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 18 | 192.168.1.117 | 192.168.1.117 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 19 | 192.168.1.118 | 192.168.1.118 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 20 | 192.168.1.119 | 192.168.1.119 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 21 | 192.168.1.120 | 192.168.1.120 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 22 | 192.168.1.121 | 192.168.1.121 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 23 | 192.168.1.122 | 192.168.1.122 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 24 | 192.168.1.123 | 192.168.1.123 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 25 | 192.168.1.124 | 192.168.1.124 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 26 | 192.168.1.125 | 192.168.1.125 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 27 | 192.168.1.126 | 192.168.1.126 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 28 | 192.168.1.127 | 192.168.1.127 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 29 | 192.168.1.128 | 192.168.1.128 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 30 | 192.168.1.129 | 192.168.1.129 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 31 | 192.168.1.130 | 192.168.1.130 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 32 | 192.168.1.131 | 192.168.1.131 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 33 | 192.168.1.132 | 192.168.1.132 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 34 | 192.168.1.133 | 192.168.1.133 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 35 | 192.168.1.134 | 192.168.1.134 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 36 | 192.168.1.135 | 192.168.1.135 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 37 | 192.168.1.136 | 192.168.1.136 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 38 | 192.168.1.137 | 192.168.1.137 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 39 | 192.168.1.138 | 192.168.1.138 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 40 | 192.168.1.139 | 192.168.1.139 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 41 | 192.168.1.140 | 192.168.1.140 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 42 | 192.168.1.141 | 192.168.1.141 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 43 | 192.168.1.142 | 192.168.1.142 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 44 | 192.168.1.143 | 192.168.1.143 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 45 | 192.168.1.144 | 192.168.1.144 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 46 | 192.168.1.145 | 192.168.1.145 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 47 | 192.168.1.146 | 192.168.1.146 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 48 | 192.168.1.147 | 192.168.1.147 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 49 | 192.168.1.148 | 192.168.1.148 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 50 | 192.168.1.149 | 192.168.1.149 | 10 | map01 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

Finding a Server

Don't get a good ping on *PC Games'* Quake II server (204.162.101.7)? Two tools have made it simple to find a server where you get a good ping (generally defined as 200ms or less for modem players).

PingTool was the first out the door with Quake II support, and it's one spiffy program by Marty Saxton (aka Earl). This shareware program looks at existing Quake II server lists (you can add more), pings all the servers on them, and lists the ping for each. Double-click on the IP address or server name, and voilà! Before you know it, you're on the server. It includes a bunch of other great features, such as the ability to "time" a server to get your average ping, add a server to Quake II's address book, and search for players. It also supports QuakeWorld. Get it from www.pingtool.telefragged.com.

GameSpy, formerly QuakeSpy, also supports Quake II and has many of the same features as PingTool, plus it shows what map is currently being played, has a chat interface, and supports Hexen, QuakeWorld, and Jedi Knight. Get it from www.gamespy.com.

Quake II Cheats

Well, you can't use them in multiplay (unless the server has cheats turned on), but these codes can help you do some serious damage in single-play. To use 'em, open the console by hitting the tilde (~) key, and type what's in the left column to get the effect listed in the right column.

god invincibility
notarget freeze monsters
noclip go through walls
give all all items/ammo
give health 100 health
give weapons all weapons
(no ammo)
give ammo all ammo
give armor 200 body armor
give body armor +1 body armor
give jacket armor +1 jacket armor
give combat armor +1 combat armor



give shells +50 shells
give bullets +50 bullets
give cells +50 cells
give slugs +10 slugs
give grenades +1 grenades
give rockets +5 rockets
give [weapon name]: Get desired weapon (no ammo). The weapon names are Blaster, Shotgun, Super Shotgun, Machine Gun, Chaingun, Grenade Launcher, Rocket Launcher, HyperBlaster, Railgun, and BFG10K.
give [item]: Get desired item. The item names are Quad Damage, Silencer, Invulnerability, Rebreather, Enviro-Suit, Ancient Head, Adrenaline, Bandoleer, Ammo Pack, Data CD, Power Cube, Pyramid Key, Data Spinner, Air-strike Marker, Blue Key, Red Key, Security Pass, Commander's Head, Power Shield, and Armor Shard.

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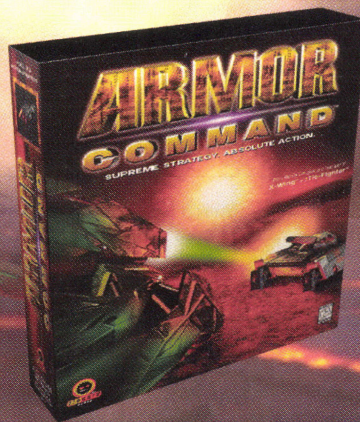
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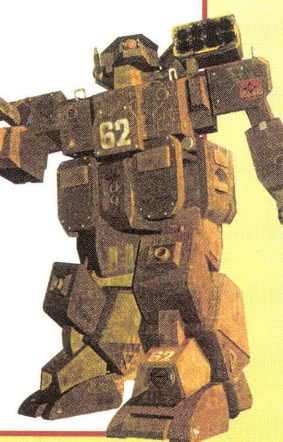
For games we've rated as an A or A-, admittance to the A-List is the ultimate honor. If it's on this list, it's not just great, it *rocks*. Serious gamers will want all of these titles in their collections.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Civilization II | (June '96) | MicroProse |
| Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far | (Jan '98) | Microsoft |
| C&C: Red Alert | (Feb '97) | Westwood Studios |
| Diablo | (Feb '97) | Blizzard Entertainment |
| Duke Nukem 3D | (July '96) | GT Interactive |
| Dungeon Keeper | (Sept '97) | Electronic Arts |
| Jedi Knight | (Dec '97) | LucasArts |
| Links LS '98 | (Oct '97) | Access Software |
| Longbow 2 | (Feb '98) | Electronic Arts |
| Master of Orion II | (March '97) | MicroProse |
| MDK | (May/June '97) | Playmates |
| Myth | (Feb '98) | Bungie |
| NHL 98 | (Nov '97) | Electronic Arts |
| Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee | (Feb '98) | GT Interactive |
| Pro Pinball: Timeshock! | (Sept '97) | Empire Interactive |
| Starfleet Academy | (Nov '97) | Interplay |
| Quake | (Oct '96) | GT Interactive |
| Total Annihilation | (Dec '97) | GT Interactive |
| X-COM: Apocalypse | (Oct '97) | MicroProse |
| X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter | (July/Aug '97) | LucasArts |

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING

Yes, the *PC Games* editors play tons of games, but there are some we've stuck with beyond the call of duty. Here are the five games we've been playing the most over the past month.

- 1 **Quake II**
- 2 **Jedi Knight**
- 3 **Myth**
- 4 **FIFA 98**
- 5 **Heavy Gear** →



HOW WE RATE GAMES

Here at *PC Games* we use a letter-grade system to rate games. Everyone knows what our grades mean without needing an in-depth explanation or clever chart: an A+ is the best score possible and an F is a complete bust. To give you a better feel for the overall quality of a title, we rate each game in six key areas. We also select a Game of the Month for each issue. We review games when and only when the makers say they're ready for review.

GAME of the MONTH: The *PC Games* Game of the Month is the one title among the month's releases that stands out from the rest. While it's generally the best overall game of the month, a game will occasionally warrant this honor not because it's the highest-rated game in the issue, but because it's a standout in one or more areas.

GAMEPLAY: In a nutshell, how much fun is it to play? This takes into account the quality of the game's interface and control scheme.

GETTING STARTED: How much reading, studying, and hardware-tweaking are required before you can start to have fun? (The less the better.)

GRAPHICS: How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they serve the game? If a game's 3D-accelerated graphics are significantly different than its standard look, we offer separate grades.

SOUND CHECK: How good are the game's sounds and musical score, and how well do they serve the game?

OVERALL GRADE: All in all, how strongly do we recommend the game for purchase?

MULTIPLAYER: How much value will you get from the game's multiplayer element, if there is one? (N/A = not available) This independent rating takes into account ease of multiplayer setup.

...YARMOOR [YELLOW] DEFEATS FLATLINER [BLACK] IN A SANCTIONED MATCH ON SOLARIS...

Stone -GrpW-> -----: Where did DW's Banshee go?

JT Chance -GrpW-> -----: It shredded my gyro!

I'm out! DEAD!

Stone -GrpW-> -----: I'm gonna need help

- who's left?

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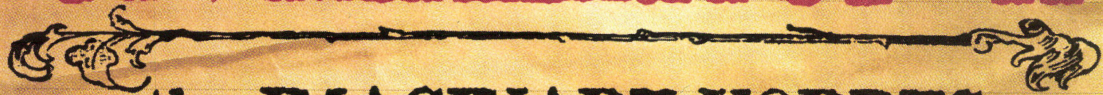
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ATTENTION

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TORCHING your VILLAGE
JUST TURNED INTO
REAL PEOPLE



CITIZENS, BATTEN
THY HATCHES AND
MUSTER THY WITS.

The new ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION II brings you face to face with the most volatile opponents ever: real flesh-and-blood humans just like you. The long-awaited multiplayer edition of CIVILIZATION II also lets you join a game in progress and take over for an AI opponent. A negotiation module lets you sit down with other players to offer trades and make treaties. Or break them if you're forced to. Because with real opponents, there's no telling what course history will take.



ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION II provides you with the best-selling global strategy game CIVILIZATION II and the add-on scenario pack CONFLICTS IN CIVILIZATION. Plus, the ability to go mano-a-mano with up to six other players via hot seat, modem, LAN or the Internet. You'll agree that ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION II turns an award-winning strategy game into an altogether new experience. Because if you thought Attila the Hun was nasty, wait 'til you meet Frank the Dry Cleaner.



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MULTIPLAYER



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GAME OF THE MONTH



Goooooooooooooooooalllllllllll!!!!!!

By Rob Smith



1998
BEST OF THE BEST
PC
GAMES
A★List
BEST OF THE BEST

Were you aware that France will host the next World Cup finals, which will kick off in Paris on June 10, 1998? Did you know that the US national team has qualified? Well, it has. And hopefully that'll give soccer another popularity boost.

If you want further evidence of why the game is such a hit, check out EA Sports' latest incarnation of its FIFA license. I'd tip it as not only the best soccer game on the market by far, but as possibly the best sports game ever made.

I was frustrated by EA's apparent complacency in the 97 version. With FIFA 98: RTWC, not only have those issues been addressed, but it also seems that virtually every element has been reassessed to make it *the* complete soccer experience.



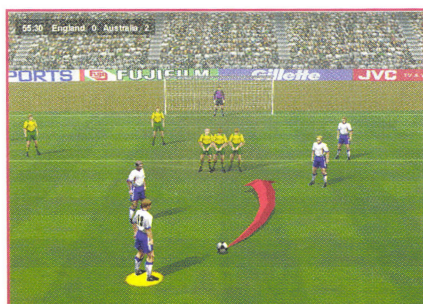
striker Ronaldo from Inter Milan, you can; you just have to come up with some 23 million pounds by selling from your own squad.

FIFA 98 natively supports 3Dfx and PowerVR, giving a stunningly realistic representation of the stadiums. On the field, the players look and move so realistically, at times I genuinely thought I was watching TV. The MotionBlending technique captures all the nuances of soccer players' movements in the finest detail. For example, a winger, crossing the ball at pace from the touchline, will fall over as his balance shifts. It's gobsmackingly realistic.

The players can now also deke and pull off some funky special moves. The AI's movement of players you don't control is generally first-rate. And, of course, you can now save your golden goals. These may not come easily at first, as the AI goalkeepers have been significantly enhanced. They now command all of their penalty area, come to catch and punch the ball, and even dive at an attacker's feet.

Commentary is supplied once more by England's voice of soccer, John Motson, ably assisted by Andy Gray's Scottish lilt. Great sound effects include tackle-grunts, ball bounces, and crowd chants.

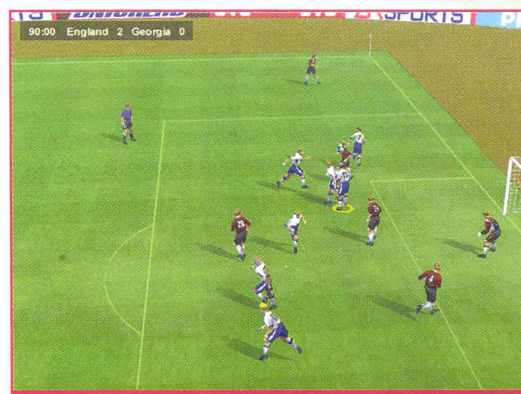
English band Blur supplies a couple of great tracks for the menu screens as you work out team tactics, formations, starting lineups, and which players are to take penalties, free kicks, and corners. The only thing missing here is a play editor for set pieces (FIFA 99?).



Hit free kicks from this range with a curve to get the ball around the wall.

For starters, there's the sheer scope. Check this: 172 national teams along with 189 club teams from 11 leading soccer nations are represented. That incorporates some 6,400 different (real) players, each with individual stats. So you can plot the course of your selected nation's road to France from the regional qualifying rounds, battling to be one of the final 32.

In addition to the three difficulty levels offering considerable replayability (World Class level is *tough*), the national squad rosters can be changed, allowing you to bring in fringe players. You can also play in league mode in any one of the 11 nations. Adding further spice is the option to transfer players. Each team is given a kitty to be spent on any of the 6,400 players—so if you want to buy the Brazilian



Getting the ball under control in a crowded penalty area is tricky. Keep pushing, then hack it clear.

EA has gone the distance for multiplayer support too. While two players on one machine is the best option, it's possible to get up to 20 playing a league or tournament over eight linked PCs.

I honestly wasn't expecting much from FIFA 98, and what I got was a staggering surprise. Its level of detail is phenomenal, its realism second to none, and its overall production values are so high-class, I reckon it edges out NHL 98 as the finest sports game ever made.

FIFA 98

| | |
|------------------|----|
| GAMEPLAY: | A |
| GETTING STARTED: | A- |
| GRAPHICS : | B+ |
| 3D ACCELERATED : | A |
| SOUND CHECK: | B+ |

A
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: A-

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800-245-4525
www.easports.com

WEB: www.easports.com

PLATFORM: Win 95 CD

REQUIRES: P100, 16MB RAM,
20MB HD, 1MB PCI graphics,
4x CD-ROM drive

RECOMMENDED: P200, 32MB RAM, 100MB
HD, 3Dfx card, 8x CD-ROM
drive, six-button joystick

STREET PRICE: \$50

TIPS ▼ In the easier modes, get the ball to the wings. Then, rather than cross the ball, cut in and do a normal pass to a better-placed attacker. ▼ Remember, you can shoot low by hitting the opposite direction on the joystick as you shoot.



3Dfx provides fog effects on certain match days.



Excalibur 2555 A.D.

More 3D babe-alicious action

By Bob Lindstrom

Just as a rule of thumb, I don't date women who jump into the car swinging a sword or hefting a 12-gauge shotgun. Call me an unenlightened sexist pig, but in my experience, it tends to put a damper on the evening. Plus, the shoulder holster is real uncomfortable during a slow dance.

Like most of us, however, my prejudice against sex and ordnance doesn't extend to computer games. Ever since Lara Croft flipped her adorable cut-offs across an exercise mat and ran off to become a Tomb Raider, computer-game players gained a new enthusiasm for adventuring with daring ladies.

Beth is the heroine of Sirtech's Excalibur 2555 A.D. Her challenge is fighting opponents

some object that Beth can recover: a medical kit, logs, a glass, and so on.

At this point, Excalibur's gameplay becomes shallow. Beth's time is spent pursuing these miniquests, fighting the bad guys and monsters who populate the dungeon—oops—underground city, then delivering the recovered items. The larger dimensions of the story more or less disappear.

And is it unfair of me to ask what the heck mankind has been doing for 450 years since the meteor? The underground city has no technology to speak of. The combat is hand-to-hand. Zombies and skeletons and giant bugs roam around. The whole place looks like a big dungeon. A big...Oh! I get it! Forget the city. Beth is in a big dungeon. End of sentence. End of high-concept.

Excalibur exploits the simplicity of the hack-and-slash dungeon crawl very effectively. Your viewpoint of Beth's activities can be switched between an over-the-shoulder and a distant view. Aside from the ability to manipulate inventory items, that's about the extent of her actions.

With 3D hardware acceleration, the game boasts graphics ranging from handsome to striking, with a smooth frame-rate. The unaccelerated graphics are chunkier in both appearance and animation but still capture the essence of the setting. Sound effects are solid if unremarkable, although the understated voice-acting is excellent.



Take this Lara Croft comparison test. Is Beth younger? Cuter? Blonder?



A little magic, a big sword, and Beth turns scorpion exterminator.

and finding treasures in flat-floored dungeons with relatively simple layouts and none of the climbing and exploring of Tomb Raider.

The story is mostly dungeon-dressing. An impending meteor collision with Earth causes people of the future to take protective residence underground. Four centuries later, a despotic leader, Delavar, builds a time machine and goes back to steal the sword Excalibur, in hopes of using its magic to advance his dictatorial power.

Merlin is cheesed off. He casts a spell to send his shapely niece Beth into the future to recover the sword. While allegedly looking for Excalibur, Beth roams the underground rooms and hallways, talking to scattered inhabitants, each of whom seems to have lost

Some guys just don't know when they're in over their heads, dating-wise.



EXCALIBUR 2555 A.D.

GAMEPLAY: B
GETTING STARTED: A
GRAPHICS: C
3D ACCELERATED: B+
SOUND CHECK: C

C
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: N/A

A second-place cyberbabe in a straight-ahead hack-and-hunt.

DEVELOPER: Telstar
PUBLISHER: Sirtech
800-447-1230
www.sirtech.com
WEB:
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P100, 16MB RAM, 20MB HD, SVGA, 2x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P166, 3Dfx-based card
STREET PRICE: \$40

TIPS ▼ The automapping feature makes pencil and paper largely unnecessary. However, you may want to take notes on where objects and people are. Trust me, you *will* die and return to the start of a level. Good notes can do more than a good memory to improve your success rate.



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DEATHTRAP Dungeon

The Beginning

Fang, the Town of Lost Souls, is ruled with an iron fist by the tyrant Baron Sukumvit. Deep in the hillside overlooking Fang, he built a labyrinth of trap-filled passageways and rooms populated by stomach-churning creatures of evil. He named it Deathtrap Dungeon. All those who opposed him were dispatched to the dungeon. None came out alive. Yet the Baron was a gambling man at heart and loved notoriety. He let it be known that anybody in the lands beyond Fang would be welcome to enter the dungeon of their own free will. If they killed the supreme beast Melkor the Red Dragon and came out alive, he would give them a purse of 10,000 gold pieces and grant freedom to the town of Fang. The first year, seventeen brave warriors attempted The Walk, as it later came to be known. Not one reappeared. Undaunted, you have decided that you will attempt The Walk for the reward—or perhaps to free the people of Fang from Melkor's foul dominion.

The Quest

Your quest is to slay Melkor the Red Dragon and get out of the dungeon alive! As you progress deeper into the dungeon, you will need to collect all the weapons and magic you can to aid you. The dragon is a disgustingly powerful enemy, and he has many allies—some who are almost his equal in power.

The Characters

You can play Deathtrap Dungeon as one of two characters, Red Lotus or Chain Dog.

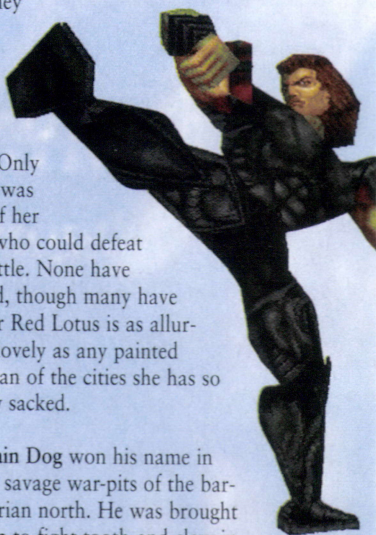
Red Lotus was seized by marauding pirates at an early age and made a slave. Her masters were some of the most despicable scumbags ever

to sail the seas, and she was brought up in an atmosphere of pain and terror. All that interested her was every nuance of killing and slaying. She became as skilled in the arts of war as any warrior. When she grew to womanhood, the pirates took a different kind of interest in her. She had to kill five of them before they would leave her alone. They

grew to respect her—or more accurately, fear her. Only one man was worthy of her love: he who could defeat her in battle. None have succeeded, though many have tried—for Red Lotus is as alluring and lovely as any painted courtesan of the cities she has so joyfully sacked.

Chain Dog won his name in the savage war-pits of the barbarian north. He was brought up to fight tooth and claw in the arena for the entertainment of decadent nobles and fat merchants.

He was so brutal, so vicious and cunning, that the guards had to keep him chained up like a dog, to be unleashed only when he was required to fight: hence his name. One day, his jailer made a mistake, and Chain Dog escaped. He comes to Fang in search of wealth. Here, at least, he would be paid handsomely for his brutal skills. With money, he can retire to a life of ease. Then and only then will he take a new name.



THE DENIZENS OF DEATHTRAP DUNGEON

Many evil creatures have flocked to Baron Sukumvit and his ally, Melkor the Dragon, eager to share in the booty and the tribute from the people of Fang. A high-ranking demon-lord from the Palace of Agony in the Pits of Hell has joined with the dragon. He has brought with him troops from the Legion of the Damned. These include an army of the Undead (rotting Zombies, vicious Skeleton Warriors, soul-chilling Ghosts) and Shock troops and Slayers from the Abyss (cackling Imps, ferocious Pit Fiends, black-hearted Warrior Priestesses, four-armed Demonesses, and like-minded devils of the dark).

But that's not all. Indeed, these foul creatures are just a sampling of the evil beasts you must conquer in Deathtrap Dungeon. Following is a list of just some of the monsters that haunt the halls of the dungeon, as compiled by the sage Trismigistus. It's provided as an aid to those who attempt The Walk. Read carefully—it could save your life.

THE BESTIARY

The Alchemists of Chaos

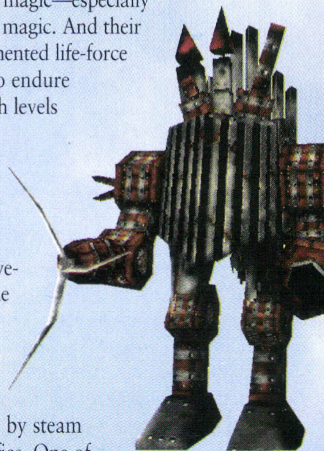
The Alchemists were once great and good wise men who strove to uncover the secrets of life. What they discovered drove them mad long ago. Now their warped and twisted minds are filled with the dreams of the insane—world domination, immortality at any cost, experimentation for its own sake, the enslavement of others, the construction of the ultimate machine—you know the story. Three select members of this society of rabid vivisectionists have answered Baron Sukumvit's call and set up shop in the dungeon, with the blessing of Melkor. They have brought with them a menagerie of machines they call the Automata and have created many Minotaurs (see next page) to guard them. The Alchemists carry small bombs that they hurl in your direction on sight. Then they endeavor to remove various parts of the victim's body for experimentation, using a rusty old saw. The standard tactic for dealing with these vicious little sods is to obliterate them as quickly as possible, using whatever weapons you can bring to bear. Be



warned, though: they have a highly developed resistance to all magic—especially to red and blue magic. And their artificially augmented life-force enables them to endure surprisingly high levels of punishment.

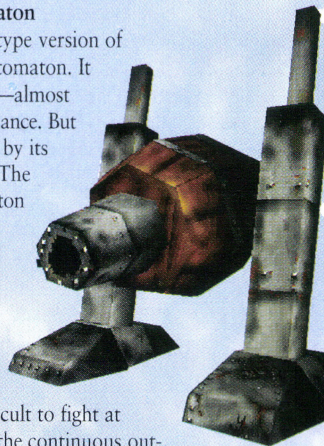
Greater Automaton

The Alchemists' crowning achievement to date, the Greater Automaton is a massive man-shaped war machine driven by steam and arcane artifice. One of its mechanical appendages throws out jets of burning flame; the other is tipped with great steel pincers for piercing and slicing flesh. It's festooned with whirling blades and spinning drills, making close combat with this mechanical monstrosity a risky business indeed. Constructed only to destroy the living, it's horribly efficient at its appointed task. Fortunately, it has weaknesses. Fire will do it great harm, and energy-based attacks like the Flamelance and the Arc of Power will also damage it greatly.



Minor Automaton

This is a prototype version of the Greater Automaton. It looks harmless—almost cute—at first glance. But don't be fooled by its bumbling gait. The Minor Automaton is, in essence, a flamethrower on legs. It'll bathe you in flame as soon as it looks on you. Fast and nimble, it's difficult to fight at close range, as the continuous outpouring of flame will scorch and burn you before you can get a hack in. Try and take it from the side, or sneak up from behind. Better still, blow it away from a distance with the Infernal Device, or any other Ranged Weapon you can get your hands on.



Minotaurs

These hideous hybrids of man and beast are the result of crazed experiments by Chaos Alchemists. The Alchemists have seized many innocent townsfolk of Fang and dragged them off into the depths of the dungeon. There they have subjected them to all manner of evil magic and mutated them into powerful horned monstrosities, half-man, half-bull. Their minds have been completely erased in the process, and now they live only to destroy. Their augmented size and strength means the Minotaurs can take damage as well as give it out. Do not think of them as they once were—if you hesitate, they will destroy you.



The Bloodbeast

A creature of primordial horror, spoken of only in legend and myth, the Bloodbeast is said to be the spawn of the Old Ones, those ancient beings who also fathered the race of dragons. Its massive, wart-encrusted body exudes a slimy ichor, in which it wallows like a fat, bloated toad of improbable size. Its long and sinuous tail is capped with a deadly sting that it can bring down over its body with frightening speed. The size of its sting is enough to split a man in two, never mind its fatal venom. Its jaw is lined with rows of teeth, and its pincer-like claws can dismember its prey in the blink of an eye. Thankfully, the Bloodbeast cannot leave the pit of its own slime. However, it's well-nigh invulnerable to all forms of attack, though some sages claim the Venom Sword can burn through its steely hide. But the Bloodbeast does have one weakness. Its skin is covered in eyes, only one of which is real. This eye is its one vulnerable spot, in the middle of its forehead. Strike there enough times, and you may slay this hideous nightmare of a monster.



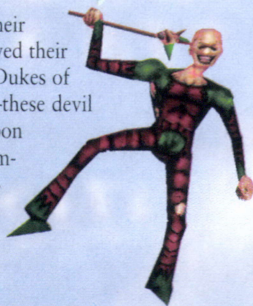
Death-Jugglers

Street jugglers out of your worst nightmare, these vicious harlequins will try and batter you senseless with the clubs they hold in both hands, laughing all the while.



Hell-King's Jesters

Once they've served their time—or rather, survived their time entertaining the Dukes of Hell in their palaces—these devil Jesters are released upon Earth to entertain themselves. This usually involves beating the living to death with their wands.



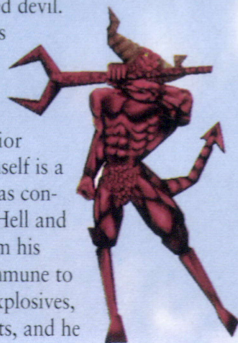
Warrior Priestesses

Savage cultists who have sold their souls to evil, the Warrior Priestesses of the Cult of the NecroDemon wield a sword in each hand with unspeakable skill. Their vicious Groin Strike is feared by all. Do not be fooled by their feminine appearance—they are dangerous and thoroughly corrupt.



Agrash the Necromantic Demon

Agrash is a Greater Demon from the Pits of Hell who has entered into an unholy alliance with Sukumvit and Melkor. He looks like a powerful red devil. Agrash has many troops from the Abyss under his command, including his fanatical worshippers, the Warrior Priestesses. Agrash himself is a mighty opponent: He has control over the flames of Hell and can launch fireballs from his Magic Trident. He is immune to the effects of fire and explosives, for these are his elements, and he has power over them. His one weakness is the Red Sword, forged specifically to deal with creatures of fire. It is your one sure hope. He can be slain by other means, but those without magic weapons will have the hardest time of all.



The Dragons

Ancient beings of malevolent evil, the dragons have long been the scourge of mankind. Melkor is one of the oldest, and he has brought two of his brothers to Deathtrap Dungeon.



Melkor the Red Dragon

All dragons are large, but Melkor is one of the biggest. Eventually, you will have to face and destroy him, if you want to get out of the dungeon alive. His scaly armored hide is as tough as cold iron, and his vast bulk can absorb astonishing

amounts of damage. Non-magical weapons will have little chance of harming him. The Red Sword is the only weapon known to be truly effective against Melkor. The problem is how to get close enough to use it without going down in an all-consuming ball of Melkor's fire-breath, not to mention the devastating power of his claws. Add to that the fact that he flies, and you realize the depth of the challenge. As for Ranged Weapons, the Infernal Device and the Flamelance may be effective, but you'll need a lot of ammunition. Curiously, the Firespell may also work. Another useful spell may be the War Pigs of Doom: Melkor's usual defenses may be nullified somewhat by their otherworldly nature. No one has ever defeated Melkor before.

Rend/Rip/Roar the Hydra

Fortunately, this three-headed dragon cannot fly. On the other hand, it's so massive that killing it will take all your effort.

It can absorb more damage than Melkor, and each one of its heads, Rend, Rip, and Roar, can bite your head clean off. Not only that, but Roar, the middle head, can breathe fire all over you as well! Try and stay on the move, dodging and weaving, whilst getting a strike or a shot in whenever you can, however you can. Whittle the hideous brute down—eventually you will slay it. Theoretically.



Vilefor the Purple Dragon

Vilefor is a fine-looking dragon, graceful and majestic. But don't let that fool you. He's also rotten to the core and loves nothing more than to fry

anyone stupid enough to get in his way. Being much younger than Melkor, Vilefor's hide isn't nearly as tough, so he hasn't built up as much resistance. Having said that, non-magical weapons will be almost useless, and he is completely resistant to Red-based attacks. His one weakness is said to be the Black Spirit Sword—but be sure to have plenty of healing in reserve! Vilefor can fly and breathe fire, so the problem with Melkor is also true here—how to get close enough to use the sword, assuming you have one? Ranged Weapons will serve you well, but conserving ammo for the final battle with Melkor is an important consideration.



The Dragon Knights

These are an order of Knights who have sworn allegiance to Melkor. They have served him for many years, and their hearts have been utterly corrupted. There are three Chapters of Knights in the Order; here are the two strongest.

The Black Dragon Chapter

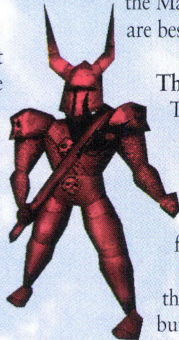
These Knights are the elite of the Order. They have sold their souls to evil and can no longer be numbered among the living. They have become incorporeal spectres, undead spirits housed in suits of magical armor. Armed with sword and shield, they are dangerous and fearless opponents. They have one weakness—their armor.

Damage it, and you damage the spirit within. Blunt weapons like the Magic Warhammer are best for the job.



The Red Dragon Chapter

These are the veteran warriors of the Order, those who have not yet embraced death. They are still mortal, though they're steeped in corruption. They fight with the mace. Fortunately, there's nothing unnatural about them aside from their love of evil, but nevertheless, they are still opponents to be respected.



The Ratmen

Skabulus, King of the Ratmen has proved to be one of Baron Sukumvit's closest and most loyal allies. He has moved into the dungeon in force with a veritable army of Ratmen—including Grenadiers, Swordsmen, Musketeers, and huge Rat Ogres. He and his horrible crew have dug themselves in, fortifying large sections of the dungeon.

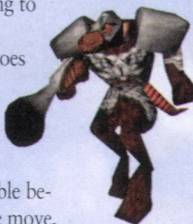


Ratman Swordsmen

The mainstay of Skabulus' army, Rat Swordsmen are the least trusted and respected of his troops. They're prone to break and run if wounded, and most adventurers can cut them down with ease. Unfortunately, their strength lies in numbers.

Ratman Musketeers

Cunning engineers and craftsmen that they are, the Ratmen have equipped some of their more reliable troops with primitive muskets. These are highly accurate, mostly owing to the spread of shot that can pepper the doughtiest of heroes or heroines with a cloud of musket balls. When faced with several of these dangerous opponents, slaying them as quickly as possible becomes a priority. Stay on the move, and use whatever cover you can find. They are no slouches in hand-to-hand combat either, as they have vicious bayonets fastened onto the ends of their muskets.



Ratman Grenadiers

Some elite Ratmen are entrusted with the Grenadier's Companion, a simple but effective wooden grenade launcher. If you get hit by one of these grenades, you'll certainly know it. The Grenadiers are pretty indiscriminate in their choice of targets, and they will tend to try and overwhelm you with a barrage of grenades. Sometimes you can use this to your advantage—if a Grenadier is firing at you, head for the nearest group of enemies and let them share some of the heat. Otherwise, kill a Grenadier as soon as you can, using whatever means you have at your disposal.



The Rat-Ogre

The Lieutenants of the Ratman host, the Rat-Ogres are club-wielding Ratmen of enormous size. They rarely flee and will do everything in their power to beat you to death with their massive clubs. They can dish out a lot of damage as well as take it. Try to avoid hand-to-hand combat where possible, though they can be defeated in close combat if necessary.



King Skabulus

Skabulus is the toughest and most ruthless of the Rat-Ogres. His gold crown and bejewelled club betray his status. You will have to defeat him to reach the Dragon. Watch for his elite Rat guards, who are tougher than the average Ratman.



The Rock Monsters

The Rockmother was created by an over-ambitious Mage in bygone times. Imbued with all the power of stone and virtually invulnerable, she drove the Mage away in terror and set about creating the tribe of Rockmen. Though she is long gone, her children live on and worship her as their creator goddess. The Rockmen have inherited her powers—they are invulnerable to all weapons and spells save one, the Magic Warhammer forged by the Dwarves, mortal enemies of the Rockmen. The Rock King, Carborundum, is a being of golden stone—nothing can harm him, not even the Magic Warhammer. Fighting the Rockmen is dangerous indeed. They will try to pulp you into a bloody mush at every opportunity. Without the Magic Warhammer, your only chance is to dodge and evade them. As for Carborundum, there's only one way past him: run for your life.



Deathtrap Dungeon: Weapons, Spells, Potions, & Charms

Yes, there are lots of baddies to fight in your quest to be the first to survive The Walk. However, there are many weapons, spells, and potions you can wield to aid your cause. Here's some of what you'll find if you're up to the task.

Close-Combat Weapons

Sword: The standard armament of any Deathtrap contestant. **Type:** Edged

Warhammer: A highly satisfactory way to crush the skulls of the enemy. Slow, but devastating. **Type:** Blunt

Red Sword: The Red Sword is a powerful weapon, the bane of dragons and demons. **Type:** Edged/Red Magic

Black Spiritsword: A dreadful weapon, capable of inflicting great damage. But beware: for every wound dealt to an opponent, the wielder suffers equally. **Type:** Edged/Black Magic

Silver Sword: The bane of the Undead, it will send their shrieking souls back to Hell. **Type:** Edged/White Magic

Venom Sword: The Spines of the Venom Sword are imbued with the deadliest toxins known to man. Especially effective for out-poisoning the poisoners of the dungeon, the Giant Spiders and Scorpions. **Type:** Edged/Poison

Magic Warhammer: This is the only weapon that can harm the Rockmen. Use with joy. **Type:** Blunt/Grey Magic

Unarmed: Fist, feet, and headbutts. **Type:** Blunt

Ranged Weapons

Blunderbuss: The Blunderbuss uses the Alchemists' black powder to throw clouds of nails and lead shot at the enemy. Very effective, but ammunition is difficult to come by. **Type:** Ballistic

Bomb: Powerful thrown weapons, with a short fuse. Make sure you don't get caught in the blast from your own bomb! **Type:** Explosive

Grenadier's Companion: The Companion launches deadly sulfurous grenades at the enemy. **Type:** Explosive

Infernal Device: Hurls firework missiles of great power at the enemy. Rare, so use wisely. Firework ammunition is rarer still. **Type:** Explosive

Firethrower: The Firethrower can bathe an opponent in roiling clouds of flame. Use with care, as the ammunition, dragon's bile, isn't easy to get ahold of (as you can imagine). **Type:** FireSpells

Starspell: The Starspell fires a ball of bright light that banishes the shadows of the underworld's eternal night as it passes. It also damages the Undead. **Type:** Energy/White Magic

Fireball spell: Hurls a ball of fire at the enemy. **Type:** Explosive/Red Magic

Razorspell: Hurls a cloud of razor-sharp blades through the air. Anyone caught in its path feels a tad cut up about it, to put it mildly. **Type:** Edged/Grey Magic

Jetspell: Fires an avalanche of rocks at the enemy. Stone 'em, single-handedly. **Type:** Blunt/Grey Magic

Potions & Charms

Health Potion: Health potions are a must. Collect as many as you can, and use as few as you can!

Antidote: One dose counteracts one poisoning.

Strength: Increases the damage you inflict. A lot.

Speed: These potions greatly increase your speed.

Charm of Icy Cool: A must for every adventurer who seriously considers taking on dragons. Helps the bearer resist the burning effects of fire for a brief time.

Warding: The Charm of Warding creates a magical shield that absorbs damage. The effects of the Charm last until all the shields are destroyed.

Anti-magic Charm: Absorbs the baneful effects of hostile magic. When you pick one up, it's immediately active. One charm cancels one incoming spell.

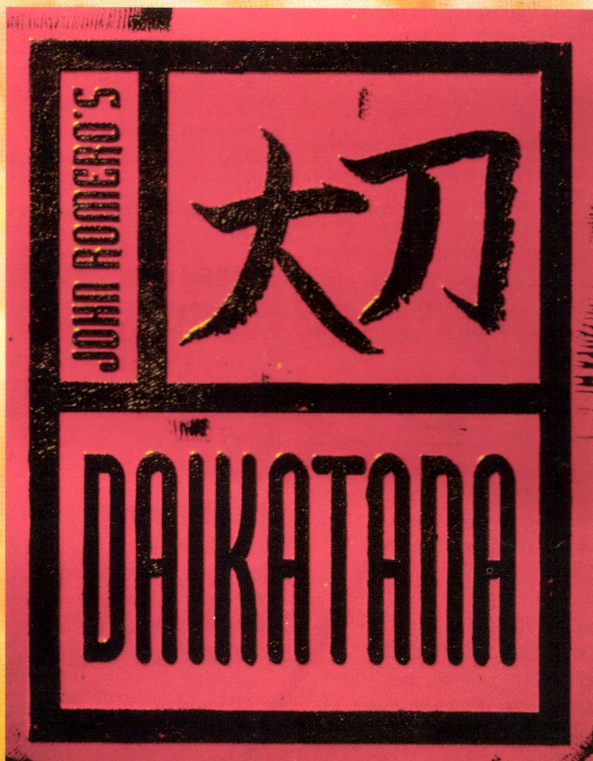
Invisibility: Renders you invisible for a brief period.

Instant-Effect Charms

These start working as soon as you pick them up.

Invulnerability: Gives you divine protection from all forms of attack. Extremely rare.

Ankh of Vitality: Provides a surge of health for the bearer. The Ankh adds a hundred hit points, even if it takes you above your starting total.



John Romero and company over at Ion Storm are hard at work on their forthcoming first-person shooter. The game should be available this spring. Meanwhile, take a peek behind the scenes at their work in progress.

The Year—2455 A.D.

You are Hiro Miyamoto, an expert in Japanese history and warfare, as well as the brightest pupil of famed scientist Toshiro Ebihara. In a dark corridor in the university library, you are approached by a striking but visibly upset young woman, who introduces herself as Mikiko Ebihara, the scientist's daughter.

Fighting back angry tears, she tells you that her father's been viciously murdered by his rival, Jarred Benedict. By way of explanation, she tells the story of her father's triumphant discovery of the legendary Daikatana sword, which gives its bearer the power of time travel. Benedict killed Ebihara and stole the Daikatana to go back in time and steal the cure for AIDS—and reap the financial benefits for himself.

Mikiko pleads for your help. If both of you can recapture the Daikatana, she can go back in time and prevent Benedict's theft of the AIDS cure, setting history straight and restoring her father's life. Mikiko promises that in return, you will be rewarded with unimaginable riches.

However, to secure the sacred Daikatana, you must break into Benedict's seemingly impenetrable fortress, specially built and designed by the deranged doctor to thwart any attempts at removing the sword. And that's just the beginning.

Once you've recovered the Daikatana, your quest to restore history to its rightful course will take you through four distinct time periods and settings:

Episode One: 2455 A.D.

You begin with Mikiko in a swamp outside Benedict's fortress. You must find a way into the fortress, defeat its guardians, find the Daikatana, and free a third character—Superfly Johnson—from prison.

Episode Two: 2030 B.C.

Your attempt to go back in time to prevent the theft of the AIDS cure goes awry, and instead of landing in 2030 A.D., you end up in Ancient Greece. You must battle your way

through mythic locations and creatures—culminating in a battle with The Minotaur—to gain enough power for the Daikatana to move forward in time.

Episode Three: 560 A.D.

Once again you arrive in the wrong place—Norway, during the Dark Ages. Most of this episode takes place inside the castle of King Gharroth. You must destroy the King and his four sorcerers to once again imbue the Daikatana with the power needed to time-travel.

Episode Four: 2030 A.D.

Finally, you end up in the right time period. Trouble is, you're in a prison cell in Alcatraz, San Francisco, just after a major earthquake. You must fight your way to the mainland and through the jumbled city streets to find Benedict and make him pay for his crimes.

The Characters

Hiro Miyamoto

This is the main character in Daikatana. The entire game must be completed as Hiro before one of the others may be selected. As Hiro, you

must locate and establish a friendship with your team, which

consists of Mikiko Ebihara and warfare specialist Superfly Johnson. Hiro is the most balanced member of the team in terms of fighting skills, agility, and health. Once you complete the game as Hiro, you may play again from the perspective of Superfly or Mikiko.



Mikiko Ebihara

Mikiko is a very beautiful and sexy woman. But that doesn't mean she can't take care of herself in a fight. Of the three team members, Mikiko's the fastest and can jump the highest. However, she does have lower health and, thus, can take less damage than her companions.



Froginator

Robotic frog that hops around and lashes you with his tongue. He's smaller than man-size: 8 inches long. His tongue lashes from a distance. [Episode 1]

Flying Gang

Muscular, mean dudes who wield nasty chain-guns. These guys fly around with a jetpack, firing at you. [Episode 4]

Rocket Gang

Heavy-duty gang members who carry a rocket launcher on one shoulder. Man-size. They walk around slowly, stop, crouch, and fire a rocket. [Episode 4]

Satyr

Half-human, half-goat dude with horns. His ranged attack is a long, arcing jump, and before

landing on you, he clomps you with his hooves. Close attack is a punch. [Episode 2]

Superfly Johnson

Superfly is big, he's strong, he's a badass. He has natural armor and a higher maximum health than Mikiko, but he can't jump as high and runs a bit slower than his teammates.

The Baddies

Make no mistake about it, your experience in Daikatana won't be just a leisurely stroll through the ages. There will be plenty of opposition to face—from Benedict's robotic legions to mythical beasts of Ancient Greece to convicts in Alcatraz. Here's a sampling of just a few of the bad guys you'll have to get the best of:

Battleboar

A four-wheeled robotic boar with long tusks, he speeds around Benedict's fortress looking for intruders.

He's man-size—5 feet long and 3 feet high—is high speed, and has an impaling attack. [Episode 1]

Sludge Minion

A man-sized robot that tends to the sewers of the fortress, cleaning up sludge lumps. Shoots sludge balls at you. [Episode 1]

Weapons

There are a lot of baddies to beat, but not to worry: you'll have a ton of weapons with which to deal destruction—around 30 in all. Here's a teaser of what you'll find in your travels:

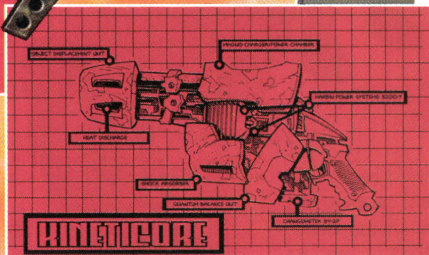




Ion Blaster

The Ion Blaster shoots an ion sphere that bounces around for about five seconds, then disappears.

The ion spheres detonate on impact with your enemy. Damage: 50 Hit Points.



Kineticores

A techy-looking iced-metal gun that shoots five steel balls at high railgun velocity. The balls move very quickly and in a straight line, one after another. They bounce off the walls 10 times until they dissipate. When they strike a creature, they will flash brightly and cause a small expanding concussion sphere. Damage: 20 Hit Points per kineball.

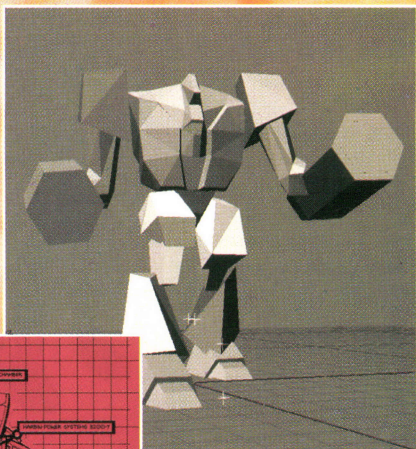
Work in Progress

Bryan Pritchard, Daikatana's lead artist, included some work-in-progress images taken in LightWave.



DoomBat

The DoomBat looks like an ordinary bat, but it has a more ferocious claws and face. Smaller than man-size—a little bigger than an ordinary bat. Two-foot wingspan. [Episode 3]



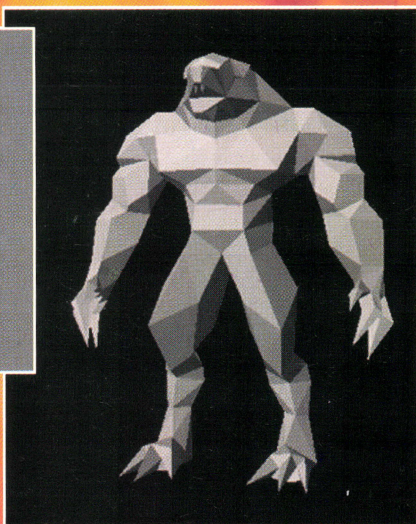
Rage

A large menacing hulk of a robot with two huge hammer fists. It patrols the halls of Benedict's fortress, looking

for intruders. Major crushing damage. Slow movement. [Episode 1]

Wolf

A werewolf that takes bipedal form—a hybrid of human and lupine features. Runs around and tears you with its claws. Only killed by silver arrows. Reverse gibbage if blasted apart by an explosive. [Episode 3]





Screen 1

Guided Tour: Level 1

Steve Rescoe is a level designer for Daikatana. Prior to joining Ion Storm, he worked in T-shirt design, silk-screening, label-machine operation, and auto-body repair. He now joins John Romero's team. Here, he gives a guided tour of Daikatana's first episode as a work in progress.

E1M1: The Swamp (SwampCo)

A helicopter will drop you and Mikiko at the edge of the swamp that surrounds the fortress. There's an impassable front doorway guarded by huge laserbots, impressing upon you just how heavily guarded this fortress must be. The swamp has a few spots of dry ground that will lead to some outlying caves with good stuff in them. Mostly you tromp through a swamp teeming with several baddies, so you must be careful.

The actual entrance into the fortress is through the sewer, whose gates must be opened by activating a lever in a control room located in the swamp's recesses.

Another semiconcealed control room with a monitor playing a SwampCo promo tape will al

low you to open the entrance to the sewer system, which leads to E1M2.

Screen 1: You're dropped off by helicopter into this open area of the swamp.

Ahead, you'll see a sludgefall; walk up the steps

beside it. Follow that path until you come to another area with two more sludgefalls. In between two of them is an opening through which you should see a light.

You can walk through this opening, up to a door, and back outside. If you turn left just before a tall sludgefall, there's another opening and, from it, a path leading up. Go up this path. When you get to the top, you see a large pipe that you can walk across. Now, before the



pipe, you can turn right and either jump over to a ledge by a cave or follow another sludgefall down to a new area.



Screen 2

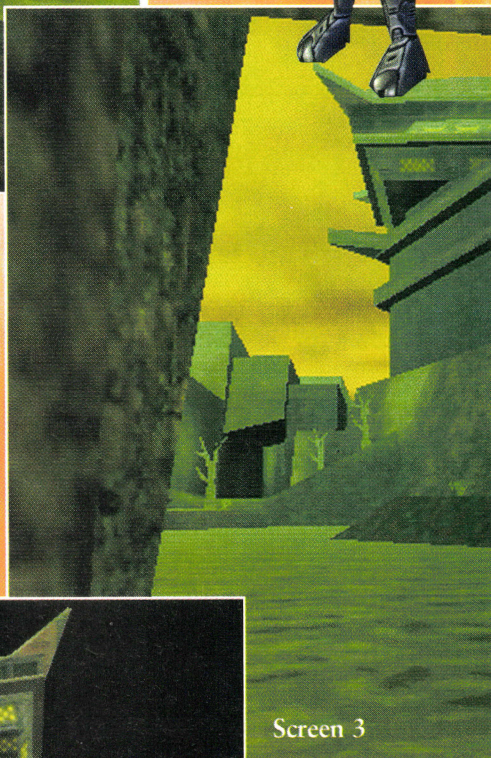
Screen 2: In this new area, you'll see a locked entrance to a sewer. Beside this is a slope that goes up into another cave. You can try that path, or you can go back to that large pipe. If you climb up the pipe, it will lead you to the side of a large fortress.

Screen 3 and Screen 4: You move straight ahead over swampy terrain and through a cave to get to the front entrance of the fortress. You must enter to get to the next level. When you find out how well guarded the fortress is, you may want to find another way in.



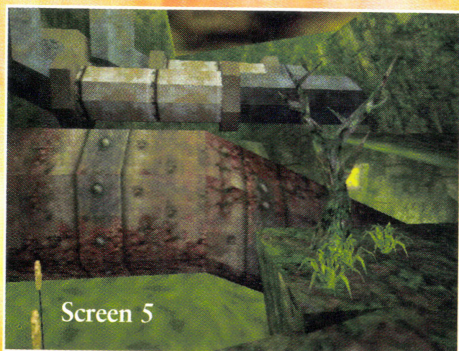
Screen 4

Screen 5: At the spot where you first climbed the pipe and saw the fortress, you can turn right and try to make your way through a difficult, rocky area behind the structure. Back there, more pipes come out from a wall and go



Screen 3

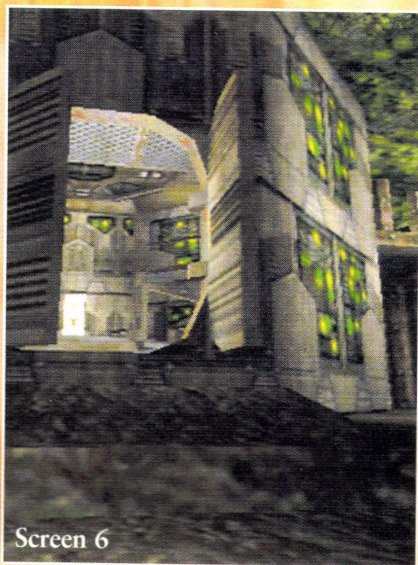
under overhanging rocks. If you jump over to the other side of the biggest pipe, you can descend to a door in the rock. This cave has a control room that monitors the swamp.



Screen 5



Screen 6: In the control room, you need to find a button that opens doors above and in front of you. This will let you step on a platform that goes up to the walkway. Then you go through the doors,

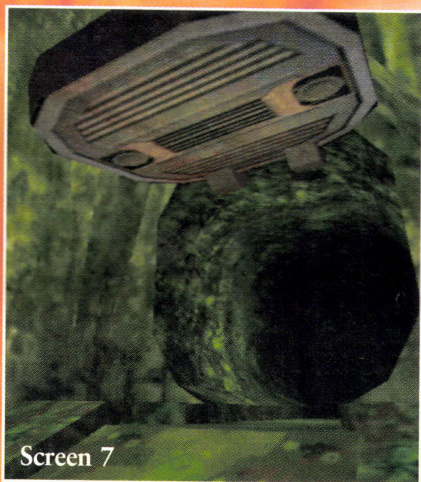


Screen 6

down a lift, and back out to the swamp. Now the entrance to the fortress' sewage system is open!

Screen 7: All the waste material from the fortress comes out here, but you can use it to gain access to the next level.

An artist who enjoys sculpting, painting, and drawing, Steve spends his free time reading science fiction, playing computer games, and rebuilding old VWs. He is also a discriminating collector of what he refers to as "interesting roadkill."



Screen 7



ION STORM

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

Who needs an N64?

By Peter Olafson

ACTION



Every so often, I hear from people who have sworn off 3D first-person shooters—not because of gore or boredom, but because of motion sickness. I typically shake my head and smile, like the old barfly who overhears a kid paying rent to the porcelain goddess on his first six-pack. Hey, I can hold my 3D.



Even with the Alien weapon, you'll need to keep moving to avoid Thunder's wrath.

Or so I thought. This 3D veteran has just had his comeuppance. It's called Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, and it gave me my first case of computer game-inspired motion sickness. Not just the polite "loss of equilibrium," mind you. If I play Turok for five more minutes, I'm going to have to scrape my breakfast off the keyboard.

This isn't a criticism, either. Somehow, somewhere, this wonderful conversion from the Nintendo 64 crosses the line between game motion and real-life motion. As best as I can figure it, my brain figured I was moving, but my body couldn't cooperate—and rebelled.

Initially released in a bundle with Intergraph's Intense 3D card and now ported to multiple 3D accelerators, Turok has you guiding the Native American comic-book hero of the title through eight huge levels of The Lost Land in search of the scattered pieces of a time-bending artifact.

Starting with just a knife and bow, you'll use up to 16 weapons to dispatch enemies; collect the usual ammo, life, and first-aid power-ups (the best-looking ones I've ever seen); and run, jump, and swim your way across a vast and savage world.

The graphics are spectacular. They start roughly in parallel to the N64 at 320-by-240 and improve from there—climbing (at least in the Voodoo Rush version) to an ultra-crisp 800-by-600, at which point the textures become almost lifelike. Is it any wonder my body's a little confused?

But I'm not: I loved Turok. I delighted in the open structure. The levels themselves are fairly linear, but they're connected at a central hub reached using multiple keys found en route. (Hence, you're bound to revisit some of them along the way.) I loved the varied and essentially human ways that enemies—not too smart, but gorgeous to a fault—gave up the ghost. I was charmed by Turok's Marioesque sensibility. (It has secret areas up the wazoo.) I appreciated the Marathon-like saved-game system (only available at certain locations). I was infuriated (in a good way) by the bosses—genuinely tough hombres—and tickled by the incidental animations of prowling wildlife and boiling waterfalls.

And I had to smile when our hero collected his hundredth life point and announced, absurdly, "I am Turok!"

OK, Turok does pause for a split second here and there. You can't control the depth to which the screen is drawn, and heftier machines could probably handle a more distant fog-effect than the moderate one used here. I prefer games that leave bodies lying

Tip of the day: Don't stand this close to the bosses.



Make my day, punk.

around for reference. (Here, they blur into the ground.) And it's a real shame Iguana West, which converted the original Turok, didn't make some provision for multiplayer. It'd be a hoot.

But this is unquestionably one of the best single-player 3D games of the year. In fact, after I grab lunch, I'm going back into the fray. I have an appointment with an especially nasty boss.

Uh, on second thought, I think I'll wait on lunch.

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER

| | |
|------------------|----|
| GAMEPLAY: | A |
| GETTING STARTED: | A |
| GRAPHICS: | A+ |
| SOUND CHECK: | A |



MULTIPLAYER: N/A

Turok makes me want to throw up. I can't think of a higher compliment.

| | |
|---------------|---|
| DEVELOPER: | Iguana West |
| PUBLISHER: | Acclaim |
| | 516-656-5000 |
| Web: | www.acclaimnation.com |
| PLATFORM: | Win 95 CD |
| REQUIRES: | P100, 16MB RAM, 40MB HD, 3D card, 4x CD-ROM drive |
| RECOMMENDED: | P200, 32MB RAM, 8x CD-ROM drive |
| STREET PRICE: | \$50 |

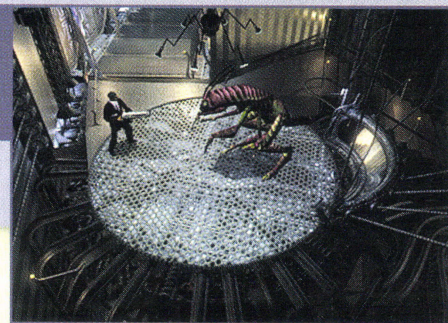
TIPS ▼ Go everywhere. Climb those vines. Swim those forbidding waters. Jump into those ravines. This probably sounds a bit stupid, but that's really the key. ▼ The game's good about revealing whether a given precipice is the edge of the game world or access to some unknown lower realm.



Men In Black

*Close Encounters
of the Turd Kind*

Play as any
of the movie's
three leads.



You will not stand out in any way...
Your entire image is crafted to leave
no lasting memory... You are no
longer part of the system.

—from the *Men In Black Official
Agent's Manual*

This reasonably good-looking but half-assed
crack at a cinematic action/adventure game is
unlikely to leave any lasting memory, and it's
sure as hell no longer part of *my* system.

In a game-world loosely based on the
movie plot, you start as New York cop James
Edwards, checking out a possible 211-in-
progress in a seedy apartment building. One
cursory glance will urge gamers to happily
cry "Resident Evil!" but it ain't so: While the
gameplay is controlled via the same third-
person view, the similarities end there.

First of all, the character/world interaction
is downright awkward, forcing characters to
be spot-on before a desired object to use it.

Second, the perspective routinely gets cum-
bersome, making it difficult to control or
indeed clearly see your character (even the
lauded RE had this quirk, occasionally). Then
there's MIB's combat scheme, which allows
for several types of melee attacks and *still*
manages to be wretched—there are few if any
fights that a good, repetitive chorus-line-rout-
ine of kicks won't win for you.

Even guns are only satisfying when your
attackers number less than two—more than
that and gunplay will likely decay into a pre-
dictable loop of Them taking their turns, and
you yours. What else?

The characters' running commentaries dur-
ing gameplay can be difficult to hear. And the
voice they got for the James Edwards/Agent J
character is less than macho. Men In Black:
A potentially cool universe, but a case of
"so near and yet so far." Bury this one in the
Ecchs-Files.
—Chris Hudak

MEN IN BLACK

GAMEPLAY: **C-**
GETTING STARTED: **B**
GRAPHICS: **B**
SOUND CHECK: **D**

D+
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **N/A**

One flash and you'll forget
this ever happened.

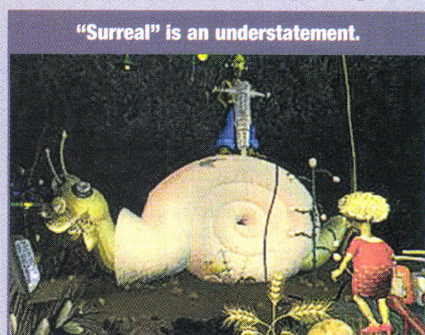
DEVELOPER: Gigawatt
PUBLISHER: SouthPeak Interactive
800-774-6183
Web: www.southpeak.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P75, 16MB RAM, 10MB HD,
SVGA, 2x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P133, 32MB RAM,
8x CD-ROM drive
STREET PRICE: \$46

Armed and Delirious

...and none too dangerous

Just look at what Armed and Delirious
has to offer—familial abuse, small-
animal torture, babies stabbed with
scissors (honest!), and an old lady who can
bend railroad ties with her brassiere. This
point-and-click graphic adventure boasts the
kind of humor that would have Beavis and
Butt-head grabbing for the "Off" button.

This atypical story has a tortured rabbit tak-
ing over the universe, kidnapping the crazed
family that abused him, and inspiring a randy
granny (who drinks incessantly and is into
S&M) to fly after them in her spaceship/



"Surreal" is an understatement.

washing machine. It plays out like one of those
barroom jokes that don't make sense at 7 p.m.
but become hilarious by last call.

Because this environment is so eccentric, the
puzzles tend to be arbitrary. Granny's voiceover
provides clues; but they wouldn't be necessary
if the puzzles had the logic of a well-written
adventure. If you like armies of ants who can
push down giant toilet seats, though, this is
your game.

To its credit, Armed has stunning produc-
tion values. The art direction, animation, and
inventive (though sometimes overbearing)
'50s-style jazz score deliver loads of positive
quirkiness to the negative quirkiness of the
story's smarmy situations and unfunny writing.
Only the voiceover work tends to be lack-
luster and routine.

There are problems with the play mechan-
ics, too. The icon pictures in the manual
are so badly reproduced that you'll have to
learn the function of various smart-icon
shapes by trial and error. And the cursor
response to hot spots seems sluggish, which

can make the point-and-click play aggravat-
ing and confusing.

Frequent animation slows gameplay. Non-
interactive events are tedious. And much of
Granny's movement is on rails, so you end up
spending time just watching her move from
point to point.

It's rare to find a product so beautifully pro-
duced and yet so creatively wrongheaded. I
guess that's a good thing.
—Bob Lindstrom

ARMED AND DELIRIOUS

GAMEPLAY: **D**
GETTING STARTED: **D**
GRAPHICS: **A**
SOUND CHECK: **A**

D
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **N/A**

Funny peculiar.

PUBLISHER: Sirtech
800-447-1230
Web: www.sir-tech.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P100, 16MB RAM, SVGA,
4x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P133
STREET PRICE: \$40

999,999 people now have the ability
to wipe you out in your sleep.



Of course, they have to
sleep sometime too.

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WWW.10SIX.COM



Flying Corps Gold

Over there, over there



Flying Corps won a permanent space on my hard drive the instant it came out—its graphics, realism, and attention to detail were simply astounding. For me, no other sim—except maybe 1942: Pacific Air War—captures the era it models so well.

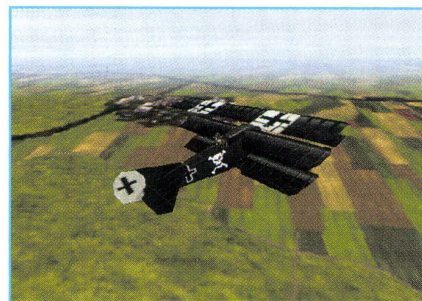
That said, FC wasn't perfect; but Empire has listened hard to feedback from gamers and attempted to address all its shortcomings. A new mission editor includes the ability to link missions to create campaigns; and there's eight-player multiplayer support, including Internet play and cooperative missions. There's also native support for 3Dfx cards and D3D support for other 3D cards—though overall, the game still needs a meaty machine to get the most out of it. The AI of enemy pilots and your wingmen has been noticeably improved; the viewing system has been tweaked;

there's support for force-feedback; and there are two new planes—the German Fokker D-VII and French Spad.

Missing in action, however, are the new French campaign espoused on Empire's Web site and the WWI flight manual that was included with the original. The latter omission is strange, considering this is a "Gold" version (you can download an electronic manual from Empire's Web site).

I'd knock FCG for not bringing enough new features to the table if it weren't just so much more fun to fly than the original—and if Empire wasn't allowing existing owners to upgrade to FCG for a mere \$10. The 3D support bumped my average frame rate on a P200 from about 12 fps to the mid 20s, and the graphics are truly lovely. With the added multiplayer support and mission editor, that's enough for me to give FCG a big thumbs up.

—Steve Klett



You thought Flying Corps' graphics were good...

| | | | |
|--|------------------|--|----------------------|
| FLYING CORPS GOLD | GAMEPLAY: | A | A- OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | B- | |
| | GRAPHICS: | A | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | B | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | | B+ |
| Big improvements come in small packages. | | | |
| DEVELOPER: | | Rowan Software | |
| PUBLISHER: | | Empire Interactive | |
| | | 800-216-9706 | |
| WEB: | | www.empire-us.com | |
| PLATFORM: | | DOS/Win 95 CD | |
| REQUIRES: | | P133, 16MB RAM, 14MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive | |
| RECOMMENDED: | | P166, 32MB RAM, 3D card, joystick, rudder pedals | |
| STREET PRICE: | | \$40 | |

NASCAR Grand National Series Expansion Pack



Already a year old, NASCAR Racing 2 shows no sign of yielding hard-disk space to the new crop of racing titles. The sim's clean, crisp graphics and unparalleled driving model keep it on the A-list of digital racers everywhere.

Bridging the gap between NASCAR 2 and the projected winter '98 release of NASCAR 3 is this superlative add-on introducing new drivers and tracks from NASCAR's primary "farm league." This expansion pack doesn't offer any intrinsic changes, but it certainly offers a welcome coat of fresh paint—30 well-sponsored paint jobs from the top Busch Grand National teams, in fact.

There are 10 authentic new oval tracks, ranging from the half-mile bullrings at South Boston and Myrtle Beach to the spanking-new California and St. Louis speedways. The level of detail that's gone into each circuit is exhaustive: The unevenly strung power lines running down Milwaukee's backstraight are

so diverting, I found myself smacking straight into the turn-three wall. Other real-life tracks include Nazareth, Indianapolis Raceway Park, Nashville, and the neck-straining one-third-mile Hickory Motor Speedway.

Two fantasy road circuits (Bull Run and Red Rock Raceway) that were previously available only on the PlayStation or Sierra's Web site have made it onto this version. These panoramic tracks are great fun to drive and a whole lot easier on the ego than the ribbon-thin courses from the original sim.

A shiny new paint job

The horsepower and handling of the new GN machines are no different from the traditional Winston Cup cars, so it's quite possible to mix and match race calendars and entry fields for added variety. And to top it all off, the GNS pack includes all the latest NR2 patches.

—Andy Mahood

New tracks like South Boston look great.



| | | | |
|--|------------------|--|---------------------|
| NASCAR EXPANSION PACK | GAMEPLAY: | A | A OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | B | |
| | GRAPHICS: | A | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | A- | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | | A- |
| Deeper, louder, and a lot more satisfying. | | | |
| DEVELOPER: | | Papyrus | |
| PUBLISHER: | | Sierra On-Line | |
| | | 800-757-7707 | |
| WEB: | | www.sierra.com/motorsports | |
| PLATFORM: | | DOS/Win 95 CD | |
| REQUIRES: | | 486/66, 16MB RAM, 65MB HD, 2x CD-ROM drive, NASCAR 2 | |
| RECOMMENDED: | | P90, 16MB RAM, SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive | |
| STREET PRICE: | | \$30 | |

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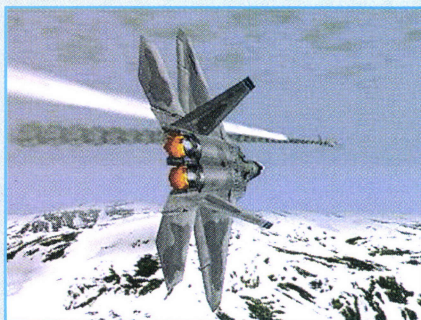
F-22 Raptor

Déjà, déjà vu

By Marc Dultz

Although NovaLogic continues to make inroads in the combat-sim genre, its unwavering mantra, up until recently, has stressed "form over function." Time and time again, the company has opted to take a less exacting approach to modeling modern military equipment, preferring to whitewash certain aspects of contemporary weapons systems in favor of providing less demanding gameplay steeped in simplicity yet immersed in hands-on appeal. This austere strategy, for all its foibles, has paid off handsomely and has managed to crack the fickle mainstream audience.

Curiously, NovaLogic has continually maintained that F-22 Raptor would be its most ambitious project and take a more authentic



An all-new, high-density, textured-mapped terrain engine—complete with dynamic light-sourcing—powers Raptor.

look at the highly publicized stealth-technology aircraft. Yet, despite being developed in close cooperation with Lockheed-Martin—the F-22's prime contractor—Raptor merely picks up where its precursor, F-22 Lightning II, left off. The difference between old-style "accessibility" and the new "authenticity" appears to be in NovaLogic's positioning of the product alone.

Laid as the supposed cornerstone of NovaLogic's newly created Lockheed-Martin Fighter Series, F-22 Raptor may be one of the most gorgeous and imaginative flight sims ever conceived. The rich, texture-mapped landscape—often shrouded in fog, cloaked in darkness, or regaled in dazzling special effects—surely stands as one of the most breathtaking forums ever to host an air-combat sim without hardware acceleration.

In-game radio chatter is lively and evocative (and was recorded directly from real pilots in the course of their duties). In one mission, your wingman is bold enough to ask a female cargo pilot—whom you've been assigned to escort—out on a date, just before the fur flies. Of course, his passion is short-lived, a wounded heart thankfully succumbing to duty once the real battle heats up. And, happily enough, the frame rate on a P200 MMX was silky smooth, never once retarding gameplay, even when the heavy breathing misted my visor.

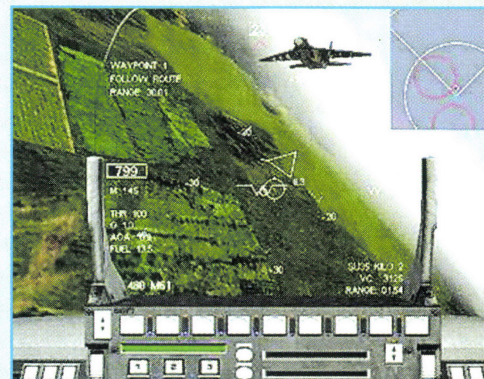
Unfortunately, the brilliant visual and aural effects belie a questionable sim. For starters, players are unable to look down from the HUD and scrutinize their instrumentation or multifunction displays. While separate displays are available for inspection, using these severely compromises the player's situational awareness. Frankly, the whole notion of providing data in an ergonomically designed cockpit is undermined in one massive stroke.

Other problems plague this sim. The real F-22 has been designed, from the ground up, to avoid detection and remain stealthy. Unfortunately, no onboard instrumentation is provided to monitor the aircraft's radar cross-section, especially during supersonic and low-level flight, or when the weapons-bay doors swing open. Moreover, missiles seem to have an uncanny ability to lock onto their target at the uppermost limits of their range, without taking into account target orientation or heading.

In addition, although the six campaigns (supported by 20 quick-start missions) have been dynamically constructed, employing self-adjusting mission goals and live battlefields to



Your lone wingman seems to be able to deal out death and destruction at a dizzying rate. Think you can keep up?



As was the case in F-22 Lightning II, players are unable to simultaneously view both the aircraft's HUD and cockpit instrumentation.

convey a sense of persistency, players must trundle through the entire grand plotline to take part in each shorter campaign. In my mind, several shorter campaign games should've been developed to augment the thoughtfully construed central story.

It's a real shame, but F-22 Raptor fails to live up to its own hype. A redesigned multiplayer mode that makes full use of the novaworld.net online matchmaking service certainly helps. Support for 100 pilots flying various missions (including the Raptor Air War [RAW] mission setup) provides an encouraging option. However, apart from an interest in a few graphical embellishments, revised flight modeling, and the multiplayer aspect, budding F-22 pilots may wonder why they should bother to give this sequel more than a passing glance.

F-22 RAPTOR

GAMEPLAY: **C**
GETTING STARTED: **C+**
GRAPHICS: **B+**
SOUND CHECK: **B**

C+
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **B+**

Fizzles after takeoff.

PUBLISHER: NovaLogic
800-858-1322
WEB: www.novalogic.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P120, 16MB RAM, 109MB
HD, SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P200, 32MB RAM, 8x
CD-ROM drive, 28.8 modem
STREET PRICE: \$50

TIPS Use afterburners sparingly. The radar cross-section of the F-22 increases dramatically each time the afterburners are engaged. Likewise, intermittently enable and disable your onboard radar system. The enemy will have a much tougher time attempting to lock up your aircraft on their radar screens.

Streets of SimCity

SimCity meets Carmageddon

By Peter Olafson

FLY & DRIVE



Let my driver's license expire a few years ago, after we moved to a city with a compact layout and ample public transportation, and I've never really regretted it—until I started playing Streets of SimCity.

Maxis' high-spec driving game—P200 recommended and 32MB of RAM required—reintroduced me to the pleasures of the road. With a 3D accelerator card, Streets is a delightfully open-ended arcade driving experience that recalls Test Drive 3. Without an accelerator, it's flaky and slow. In either case, it displays a kind of amnesia with respect to SimCity's rich history.



Grannie, piloting a muscle car, has just thrown off pursuing police and run into a gold mine of supplies.

Conceptually, Streets is cousin to SimCopter. It interprets SimCity 2000 data files to produce 3D environments, puts you in the driver's seat (you have the choice of five vehicles, utility van to sports car), and provides an overlay of missions that have you serving (in a rather too-zany fashion) as courier, secret agent, alien-busting grandma, or race driver. The roads are laden with folks only too happy to put bullet holes in your vehicle (whose textures display damage), and with power-ups to help you return the favor.

You can also just be a tourist: Pick from among 50-plus built-in city files (or supply one of your own), pick the lowest of the four difficulty settings, and just drive to your heart's content.

The buildings are lovely and seamlessly constructed, and new types just keep appearing and appearing. The settings are realistic—check out the trains and sailboats—and if you set the viewing horizon to Maximum

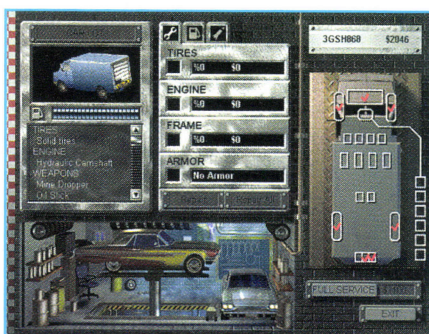
(a feature that should be included in more 3D games), you'll find the effect almost like being inside an architect's model. The only problem with the 3Dfx take is the trees, which seem to float a couple of feet above the ground.

On top of these goodies, you can import the thousands of SC2K cities available on the Net, build your own with the included Urban Renewal Kit, create race courses, and assemble car configurations.

Now, without 3Dfx, it's another matter. On a P200 MMX with 64MB of RAM (and a Voodoo Rush-based Intense 3D card, which Streets failed to detect), those same trees, while anchored to Earth, had a tendency to pop up at extremely close range and change color as I watched.

In a polygon-rich environment, Streets ran sluggishly—even with the graphics knocked down to middling settings—and often displayed inappropriate colors on distant polygons. And when my van went into the drink, the game didn't reset when I pushed the Fire key as instructed, and I had to abandon my progress. Color me annoyed.

Collision detection is unpredictable—buildings yes, trees no, pillars yes, debris no—and the game physics (if you can call them physics) are unpersuasive. I did a snowboarding-style move right off the top of a hill, and my utility van didn't even roll. Carmageddon this ain't.



In the garage, you can make repairs and add new equipment before you set out.



Hey, this ain't L.A.

Nevertheless, Carmageddon is kind of what Streets wants to be. Maxis has exchanged SimCity's roots in interesting urban chaos for Car Wars. You can't play as a commuter trying to deal with homebound traffic. You can't play as a policeman chasing a suspect, or a fireman at the back wheel of the ladder truck, or an EMT who's 10 minutes from the hospital with a patient who won't last five.

Sure, you're inside a SimCity, but in a SimCity as it's never existed, and the result is curious detachment. My one consolation is knowing that I can get connected again with one good long drive.

STREETS OF SIMCITY

GAMEPLAY: **B-**
GETTING STARTED: **B+**
GRAPHICS: **C-**
3D ACCELERATED: **B**
SOUND CHECK: **B+**
MULTIPLAYER: **C**

C
OVERALL

Not quite round the bend.

PUBLISHER: Maxis
800-336-2947
Web: www.maxis.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: P166, 32MB RAM, 46MB HD,
2MB SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive
Recommended: P200, 3D graphics card
Street Price: \$45

TIPS ▼ Stick to the external views: they're more fun and informative. ▼ Also stick to paved surfaces. Off-road shortcuts will occasionally work out—watch out for cows—but long ones are painfully slow. ▼ Traffic tickets are a pricey \$250, so pop for a radar detector, once you have the dosh to spare.

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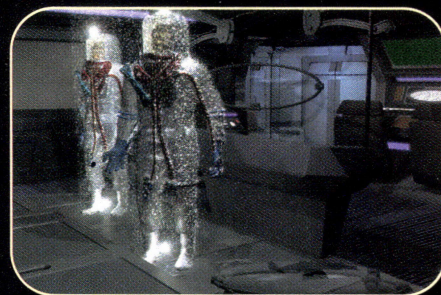
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A Uncover The Shocking Secrets Behind The Original Vulcan/Romulan Conflict



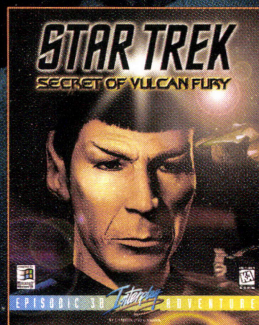
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-Adrenaline Vault

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-PC Gamer



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Test Drive 4

Cars, cops, traffic, and 3Dfx

By Jason D'Aprile

Accolade took its time getting it here, but the venerable Test Drive series has finally hit the 3D-accelerated '90s. Test Drive 4 mixes sleek, modern-day supercars with the gas-guzzling muscle cars of the past in a sort of past-versus-present speed-machine contest. As with the old Test Drive games, TD4 is a street-racing spectacle—complete with multidirectional traffic, cops, and tracks that go by waypoints, not laps.

The specs for the game are pretty impressive: ten cars (five modern, five classics) and six tracks, with an additional six upon winning the championships. The races take place in a variety of places, including the streets of

the way, leading to some excellent wrecks. Also, the tendency to get incredible air on the San Francisco track is a riot—especially if you had a crash just before taking flight.

But the game's problems are just as noticeable. First, there's the fill-rate, which, even in the 3Dfx version is heinous. Even worse, you can't customize certain controls. The game uses an array of controller presets

for a variety of pads and wheels, but it has only one generic joystick option. And to add insult to injury, when you're using a joystick, you're forced to drive with an automatic shifter. You can't reconfigure the joysticks controls at all, meaning you can't even play in the Drag Racing mode with a joystick, as that race only allows use of the standard shift.

Also, despite accurately recorded sound effects, the game's music is wrenchingly annoying and repetitive.

Another quirk is that side roads are all blocked by invisible barriers, so cunning shortcuts are out. And while TD4 offers six-player LAN support and modem and serial options, it has no built-in Internet play.

Graphically (and ignoring the fill-in problem), TD4 is a great-looking game, but it doesn't quite match NFSII:SE, especially in



Car pile-ups are pretty common on the fast-paced streets of Test Drive 4.



Nothing like taking a drive through the mall...

San Francisco, D.C., Germany, Japan, England, and Switzerland. The tracks are quite good on the whole. You'll also find an abundance of really wide roads; these help with traffic avoidance and the sometimes overly sensitive controls, and help give the game a slightly different feel than most racers.

Since TD4's closest competition is Need for Speed II: SE, it'll probably be compared most often to that game. NFSII:SE is a superior game, but TD4 has a few key ingredients that make it a genuinely viable alternative.

For one thing, it's blisteringly fast—one of the fastest racers you can get for the PC, which is a big plus. And the traffic element is the most complex you're likely to find: There's oncoming, outgoing, and side-street traffic, making racing even more intense. There are also cops who will slow you down, and the computer opponents play rough and actually try to bash you out of

Wide roads with tight, thin curves give you room to move.



TEST DRIVE 4

GAMEPLAY: **B+**
GETTING STARTED: **B**
GRAPHICS: **B**
SOUND CHECK: **C+**

B
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **B+**

Play fast and rough.

DEVELOPER: Pitbull Syndicate
PUBLISHER: Accolade
800-245-7744
WEB: www.accolade.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 220MB HD, 2x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P133, 260MB HD, 3Dfx card
STREET PRICE: \$50

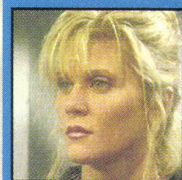
TIPS ▼ Knowing the lay of the road is always a good idea, especially with the number of hairpin curves on these tracks. ▼ Traffic can be used to great advantage, especially for blocking off a passing competitor. ▼ When crossing intersections, good timing and control are important—you don't want to plunge headfirst into the side of some sedan. Also, on the San Francisco track, always be heading straight when you take the plunge over a hill.

Wing Commander: Prophecy

It's you against the universe, again

By Steve Klett

FLY & DRIVE



Even with the departure of Chris Roberts (creator of the Wing Commander series) from Origin, a sneak peek at Prophecy last spring inspired high hopes for this fifth installment. The 3Dfx-boostered visuals had everyone's mouths agape, and the Roberts-less design team seemed truly stoked with newfound gameplay-design freedom. Plus, there was to be multiplayer support—which, aside from Armada, has not been featured in any WC product to date.

Then, a few months ago, Origin quietly took away the multiplayer support. This was a bummer, but Origin seemed confident Prophecy's gameplay enhancements in the single-player game would



Hamill's back...and so's Ginger Allen.

tide us all over. (A multiplayer expansion pack à la X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is planned for this summer.) Are those enhancements enough? Well, I don't know—you see, I'm still looking for them.

Sure, the 3D-accelerated graphics are absolutely stellar (3Dfx cards are supported natively): The exploding alien ship pyrotechnics are out of this world—sending shockwaves and debris all over the place. The ship designs—both the seven craft you can fly in the game and the 10 alien ships you fly against—are fantastic and utterly unique.

However, once you get past all the slick new visuals, you are essentially left with a derivative Wing Commander experience. The combat engine is largely unchanged: You can still only issue the same basic orders to wingmen, such as Break and Attack, Help Me Out, and so on. You still can't give wingmen specific targets to attack in succession—such as a series of gun turrets—or have them stay with

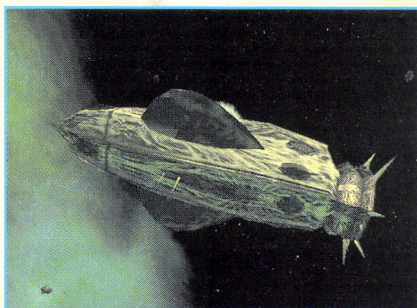
you and clear your six as real wingmen would. That said, they are much more effective at dogfighting and taking out their share of baddies this time around. But you still can't count on them when it really matters: It's still pretty much you against the universe.

The gameplay mechanics are largely unchanged as well. Where's the target-new-ship option? Where's the ability to assign friendly and enemy targets to

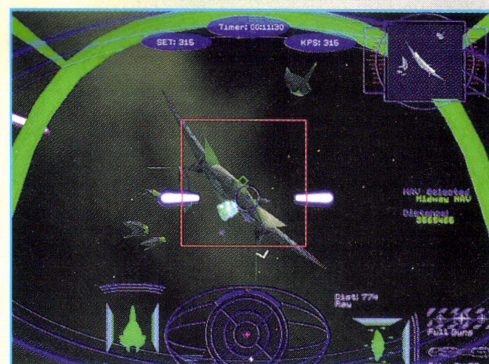
hot keys? You also lack the ability to tweak your ships' loadouts or choose the ship you want to fly in each mission.

But if a different experience isn't all that important to you, there's plenty to like. The combat is much faster and more furious than ever before—the size and breadth of the capital ships is astounding. The story is strong: An unknown alien race (hmmm...isn't this how WC IV started out?) has obliterated the Kilrathi fleet and plans to do the same to everything in its path, including Earth. As you'd guess, only the TCS *Midway* and you, a green Confed recruit, stand in its way. Through the course of the 50-plus branching missions, you learn more about the aliens and what must be done to stop them. Oh yeah, you also meet up with those kats the Kilrathi again.

Mark Hamill returns as Blair, as do Tom Wilson as Maniac (another strong performance) and Ginger Allen as the mechanic Rachael (good move, Origin). Overall, the



The huge capital ships are amazing, but they don't blow up.



The organic alien ship designs are almost too pretty to shoot...almost.

acting performances are on par with any WC game to date, and the repetitive FMV sequences are kept to a minimum. The "interactive" FMV sequences, which I never cared for, are gone altogether—like when you choose to compliment Maniac or chastise him, for example.

So if all you wanted was more WC gameplay and a new story, climb aboard Prophecy—you won't be disappointed. If you were looking for something different, you may want to pass.

WING COMMANDER: PROPHECY

GAMEPLAY: B-

GETTING STARTED: B+

GRAPHICS: B-

3D ACCELERATED: A

SOUND CHECK: B+

MULTIPLAYER: N/A

Lots of cool new visuals, but little in the way of new gameplay.

DEVELOPER: Origin Systems

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

800-245-4525

Web: www.ea.com

PLATFORM: Win 95 CD

REQUIRES: P133, 32MB RAM, 150MB HD, 2MB PCI graphics card, 4x CD-ROM drive

RECOMMENDED: P166, 3Dfx card

STREET PRICE: \$50

TIPS ▼ Don't waste your missiles! Save them for the tougher fighters or heavy ships. Try to never use them early in a mission. ▼ Hold your fire until you're up close and personal—your aiming efficiency will improve, and you won't waste ammo and energy. ▼ Don't forget to tell your wingmen to break and attack upon entering a melee. ▼ Always, always, always take out turrets and missile towers before making a torpedo-run on a cap ship. ▼ Don't rely on your wingmen to save your butt—it's all up to you.

B
OVERALL



Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor Online

This will earn me a corporate hit-squad faster than the Tehran clergy targeted Salman Rushdie, but I uniformly hated this new one-unit multiplayer take-off on Command & Conquer.

Wow, what a difference a year makes. Red Alert totally ruled hours of my time when it was released. But the units and interface in Sole Survivor seem quaint today compared to the likes of Total Annihilation and Dark Reign. I could live with that and would've still enjoyed easy game match-ups on Westwood Online and the chance to play a unit in a ragtag army of other warriors. What I can't abide are gameplay dynamics that are thoroughly unrealistic. Even if you banish the little-box power-ups, expect your big old hulking Mammoth Tank to be wasted in no time by a NOD buggy.

Gee, I never realized those machine-guns could crack through tons of armor that way. I assume this was done to balance the prospects for a wider variety of units, but it leads to re-



Where's the play balance?

ally lame encounters. In an online free-for-all with weapons, armor, speed, and rapid-fire power-ups enabled, battles border on the ludicrous. Look at the chat window during a match and you'll see plenty of messages like "That was fair," "No way," "How did that happen?," and "This sucks."

What you're left with is Online Win 95 C&C without bases, and lots of guys running around in stark landscapes. Get lucky enough

Why bother?

to make a kill, and you get points. Get enough points, and you or your team will win at the end of the set time-limit. At least Westwood included dinosaur units—that's about how seriously you can take Sole Survivor.

—George T. Chronis

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---|---------------------|
| SOLE SURVIVOR ONLINE | GAMEPLAY: | D | D OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | A | |
| | GRAPHICS: | C | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | B | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | D | |
| The M&Ms of C&C—without nuts. | | | |
| PUBLISHER: | | Westwood Studios 800-874-4607 | |
| WEB: | | www.westwood.com | |
| PLATFORM: | | Win 95 CD | |
| REQUIRES: | | P90, 16MB RAM, VGA, 4x CD-ROM drive, 28.8 modem | |
| RECOMMENDED: | | P166, 16MB RAM, 33.6 modem | |
| STREET PRICE: | | \$20 | |

NetStorm

Coming hot on the heels of Dark Reign, NetStorm makes an interesting attempt to distinguish itself from the strategy crowd. Most of the action takes place in the Pyrosphere, where various Nimbian factions, residing on giant islands hovering high in the sky, war with one another.

Evidently, the Nimbians are not only rather fierce but also a very reverent—if impassioned—race, devoutly worshipping the elemental

deities, or Furies, of Rain, Wind, and Thunder, the primordial sources of the all-important resource Storm Power. It's amassed at floating geysers, just out of reach of each island. Specially designed bridges resembling Tetris pieces must be assembled to connect the player's home island with each of these natural resources.

Underneath NetStorm's otherworldly skin lies an amalgamation of thinking games, melding a "race-against-the clock" puzzle-solving component and the usual infrastructure-development system espoused by most real-time strategy games.

Seven tutorial missions and three campaigns (encompassing 16 battles) make up the introductory single-player game. But the real essence of NetStorm is online competition: Up to eight players of any caliber may compete, with the object being to capture and ceremonially sacrifice each opponent's High Priest, thereby advancing to the next skill level.

Aesthetically, the game's replete with gorgeous animations, wondrous sound effects, and fantastic imagery. Unfortunately, because

No man is an island

so much is going on, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the various mechanisms at work.

NetStorm may be one of the most unique and deeply satisfying real-time strategies in quite some time. But the game's elaborate interface, complex structure, and steep learning curve may scare off all but the most resolute players.

—Marc Dultz

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|---|---------------------|
| NETSTORM | GAMEPLAY: | B- | B OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | C | |
| | GRAPHICS: | B+ | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | B+ | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | B+ | |
| An ethereal challenge. | | | |
| PUBLISHER: | | Activision 800-477-3650 | |
| WEB: | | www.activision.com | |
| PLATFORM: | | Win 95 CD | |
| REQUIRES: | | 486DX2/66, 16MB RAM, 15MB HD, SVGA, 2x CD-ROM drive | |
| RECOMMENDED: | | P90, 32MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, 28.8 modem | |
| STREET PRICE: | | \$40 | |

Place important structures on home islands, putting weapons and power generators further away.



Hellfire

Meet Diablo's kid brother



While Blizzard labors over Diablo II (the sequel to the runaway action/RPG hit of 1996) for late '98 release, Sierra has issued Hellfire, a single-player-only Diablo

expansion pack featuring two major new quests with four new levels apiece.

The first quest, The Festering Nest, features The Defiler, a mantis-like demon that's infested nearby fields following a meteor's impact. His caves resemble a rather unpleasant alliance between jungle and intestinal growth. Residing here are two-headed zombies, floating eyeballs with lightning attacks, and huge, boar-like creatures.

The Demon Crypt is a more challenging piece of real estate, and 20 levels' experience is the bare minimum I'd recommend for facing its Liches' magic attack, Firebats' fireballs, and sword-wielding Satyr Lords.



Aaack! The Festering Nest.

Graphics are excellent, and the animations are up to Diablo's standards. You're attacked by white, bloated Venom Tails that seem to deflate upon death, and Crypt Demons who break into tiny shards when killed.

Hellfire also introduces the monk class. The monk fits between the rogue and the mage, with a slightly higher magic rating than the former and slightly more dexterity than the latter. Monks receive bonuses to armor and hand-to-hand and staff combat, with good potential in all three major statistics.

New spells include Reflect—which bounces back to the attacker some of the damage inflicted in melee combat—and my own personal favorite, Berserk. Cast it while a group of attackers is still at a distance, and watch the fun as one enemy turns on the rest. It can reduce



a bossed mob to confused tatters in seconds.

All in all, if you love Diablo, you'll want Hellfire; and if you've never tried the original, be sure to buy both. It's that much more classy terror.

—Barry Brenesal

| | | | |
|---|------------------|----|---------------|
| HELLFIRE | GAMEPLAY: | A- | A- OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | A- | |
| | GRAPHICS: | A- | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | B | |
| MULTIPLAYER: N/A | | | |
| Quality additions to a crankin' game. | | | |
| PUBLISHER: Sierra On-Line 800-757-7707 WEB: www.sierra.com PLATFORM: Win 95/Win NT 4.0 CD REQUIRES: P60, 8MB RAM, 139MB HD, 2x CD-ROM drive, Diablo P133, 16MB RAM RECOMMENDED: P133, 16MB RAM STREET PRICE: \$30 | | | |

Battlespire

You may occasionally perceive an echo while wandering through the cavernous chambers of Battlespire—and not just of your footfall. It's the spirit of Ultima Underworld II, Origin's 1993 role-playing masterpiece, whose specter this new Elder Scrolls adventure evokes in its automap, disparate teleport-linked levels, interest in storytelling, and mix of chat and fighting.

Despite moments of charm and beauty, Battlespire struggles with issues of speed (slow, even on a high-end machine), tone,

and balance. Beginning in the Imperial guard's proving ground, you'll slog through seven immense levels to escape back to Tamriel and rescue the friend who preceded you.

The graphics are a mixed bag. In high-res mode, shadows flicker in the corners and light pools on the ceiling. But that majesty is curtailed by enemies who are pixelated 2D graduates of Daggerfall. The level design is mostly run-of-the-mill—I didn't really start to enjoy myself until the large outdoor romp in level five.

Some of the conversation is wonderful—so much so that by level three, it begins to become a practical alternative to fighting (which pitches you against the same old band of idiots). But a lot of it is repetitious, and everyone thinks they're a comedian.

Then there are the technical issues. Version 1.3 initially crashed for me when I tried to speak to characters; and later in the game, it coughed up DOS errors after the death animation.

The system for picking up items and throwing switches—the screen must be per-

fectedly centered on target—is still infuriating. The up/down buttons for the inventory work unpredictably, and only four items are visible at a time. Multiplay is limited to LAN and Mplayer (the latter wasn't ready at press time).

As I played, the echo subtly changed: Battlespire was starting to feel like Daggerfall all over again.

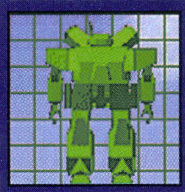
—Peter Olafson

Ultima Underworld revisited

Your passage across this Seducer-inhabited island won't be easy.



| | | | |
|---|------------------|----|---------------|
| BATTLESPIRE | GAMEPLAY: | C+ | C+ OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | B- | |
| | GRAPHICS: | C | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | B- | |
| MULTIPLAYER: C+ | | | |
| Decent, but familiar. | | | |
| PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks 800-677-0700 WEB: www.bethsoft.com PLATFORM: DOS 5.0 CD REQUIRES: P133, 16MB RAM, 180MB HD, SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive P200, 32MB RAM RECOMMENDED: P200, 32MB RAM STREET PRICE: \$50 | | | |



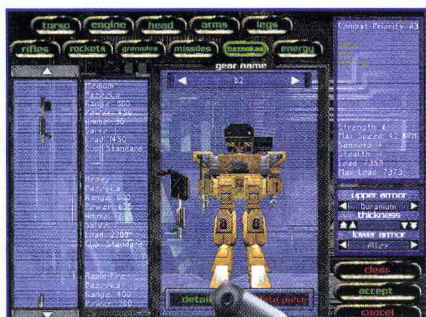
Heavy Gear

Heavy, very heavy...

By Danny W. Lam



After playing a barrage of less-than-decent games (example: Waterworld, D+, January 1998), I was mildly ecstatic when The Player asked me to review Heavy Gear, one of the most anticipated games of the season. As you may know, Activision won't be producing the next installment of the MechWarrior series, but it's not out of the robot-wrecking business. Not by a long shot—



Bazooka goes right there.

thanks to the licensing of Dream Pod 9's Heavy Gear universe.

Based on the pen-and-paper RPG, Heavy Gear is set in the 61st century. The Confederate Northern City-States and the Allied Southern Territories had once joined forces to defeat Earth's Colonial Expeditionary Force. Now, with the threat gone, the pact has dissolved, and the two sides of Terra Nova have renewed the hostilities between them. As Ranger Scott of the 67th Regiment, your job is to safeguard the lives of your crew on board the *Vigilance* and to protect the Northern borders. Film clips in between gameplay follow your career on the 30-plus missions and unfold an intricate story of honor, deceit, and betrayal.

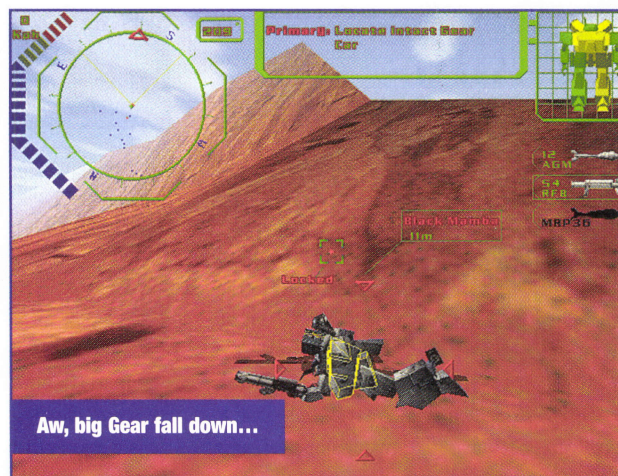
Once again, you're given access to a massive, tank-crunching bad boy. But Gears are different from the Mechs of old: they're quicker, more agile, and have a wider range of motion. They can also crouch and sidestep—but the coolest feature has

got to be the wheels. Gears can lock their legs together and roll, giving even the heaviest a speed boost. A well-thought-out HUD display gives an unobstructed view of the battlefield with familiar crosshair-targeting and a third-person camera view.

You should have no trouble outfitting your Gear due to an ingenious drag-and-drop interface. Pick your stuff, drag it to the Gear, release, and you have your new part. Customize your Gear by picking a torso, some legs, and so forth. Click on the head, and you'll be given a choice of parts to load: Autopilot, Backup Sensors, and so on. The arsenal includes firepower ranging from Grenade Launchers and Heavy Machine Guns to Anti-Gear Missiles.

To get the full visual effect, you'll want a good 3D card that supports D3D drivers.

Beautiful textured skies and even more detailed Gears captivate the senses. Let loose a pack of rockets and watch the smoke as they stream to their targets. Playing on my P233 with pounding Altec Lansing speakers, I was blown away by the sound effects, too. Firing a machine gun actually sounds like fir-



Aw, big Gear fall down...

ing a machine gun, and the Heavy Guided Mortar—WHOO! I must also commend the Activision crew for getting it to run acceptably on a P90. It's refreshing to know that a game of this caliber isn't out of reach of those with older hardware.

Single-player mode is cool, but the real action is in multiplayer. If you've got Internet access, the built-in server locator plugs you in for free play on Activision's servers. Pick a side (North or South), and you're thrust into a world of up to eight combatants, where a map keeps track of each battle fought and the progress of the ongoing war. There's also an option to play on Mplayer, but at press time, we weren't able to test it out.

This game has exceeded all my expectations, and has earned a permanent place on my gaming shelf. Now I'm waiting for part two...

HEAVY GEAR

GAMEPLAY: A
GETTING STARTED: A-
GRAPHICS: B-
3D ACCELERATED: A
SOUND CHECK: A

A OVERALL

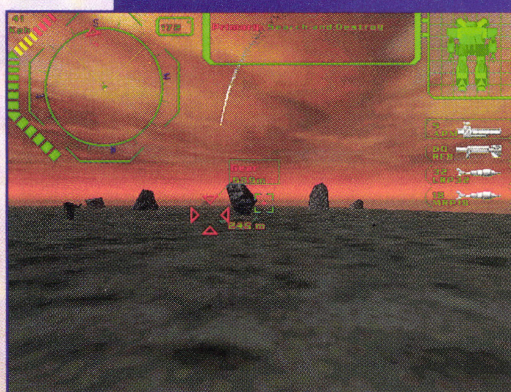
MULTIPLAYER: A

Worth every penny; this is the real thing.

PUBLISHER: Activision
800-477-3650
WEB: www.activision.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 195MB HD, 1MB graphics card, 4x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P166, 32MB RAM, 3D card
STREET PRICE: \$50

CHEATS ▼ During the game, hold down Ctrl+Alt+Shift and type:

bedouinprince: invulnerability.
checkmatein2: autowinmission.
hesbackandhesgotagun: unlimited ammo.
deplikespudding: free-eye mode (navigate using Ctrl + arrow keys).



See that streak? Bombs away!

If you don't do
SOMETHING...

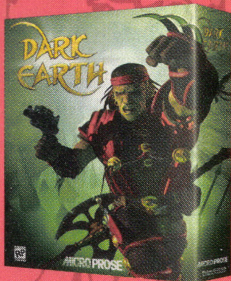
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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**DARK
EARTH**

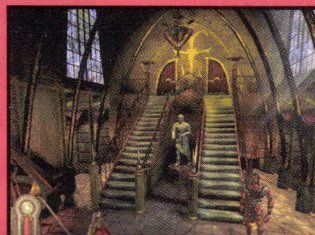
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Jack Nicklaus 5

An exclusive pastime

Two Jack Nicklaus golf games in one year? This one-two punch is because JN5 was begun concurrently with JN4—Accolade anticipated a much longer development time for the 3D JN5.

Well, they came in ahead of schedule—close your disbelieving slackjaws, folks. JN5 brings two major additions to the franchise: 3D graphics and the MouseMeter system.

The idea behind MouseMeter is to “swing” the mouse on a straight plane, striking through the ball and keeping it flying straight. It’s much more forgiving than such games as FPS: Golf—I was paring holes just a few minutes after starting. Which is why JN5 shares a problem with JN4—it’s too easy to master. Even the tough courses can be bested without a lot of struggle.

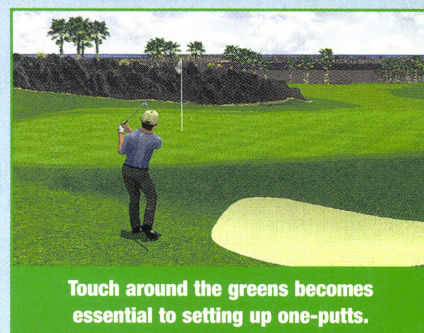
Visually, the move to 3D has actually taken JN5 down a notch from the lush graphical achievement of JN4. The 3D-rendered golfers

look jagged and unnatural, as they do in all 3D golf titles to date. The trade-off is a much deeper golf course, but the drawback certainly robs the game of realism.

JN5 ships with the same outstanding course designer as JN4, with the added twist that the courses are, naturally, fully 3D. Fledgling course architects will be able to spend dozens of hours just in the course designer, and now additional graphics and icons can be imported, allowing further customization.

This is also the best-sounding golf title yet. The course designer even lets you create and implement sounds, like crickets or birds or humming water. You can then place the sounds on your course—a player’s proximity to the sound source determines volume.

JN5 gets nearly every detail right. Its only other major stumbling block is its gargantuan hardware requirements. The full install tops out at 275MB disk space; and with my P120



Touch around the greens becomes essential to setting up one-putts.

with 32MB of RAM, the game was still noticeably slow at points. Talk about an exclusive pastime!

—Daniel Morris

| | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| JACK NICKLAUS 5 | GAMEPLAY: | B | B OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | B | |
| | GRAPHICS: | B | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | A- | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | B | |
| This is massive. If you've got the space, you'll like the swing. | | | |
| PUBLISHER: Accolade 800-245-7744 WEB: www.accolade.com PLATFORM: Win 95 CD REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 145MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive RECOMMENDED: P166, 32MB RAM, 275MB HD STREET PRICE: \$50 | | | |

FPS: Football Pro '98

New uniform, same problems

I first began my love affair with computerized football with FPS: Football Pro '95, and it cost me nearly \$60. The '96 edition had its high-res graphics and \$55 price tag. The multiplayer-enhanced '97 version was also \$55. Now we have Football Pro '98, the self-proclaimed “best football game on the market.” How much? A mere \$30.

Maybe in setting the price, Sierra knew something we didn't. They did.

If you didn't know this was Football Pro, you'd be hard pressed to recognize the game. The interface has had a complete reworking full of bells and whistles. It sports a host of new features, including play-by-play announcing, easy-to-use setup wizards, and Web utilities. But once you're past the spiffy hot-buttons, you realize that this is the same game you've been playing and complaining about for the last three years.

This is a coaching and management sim more than an arcade football game. It works best as a game of wits—you pick plays your opponent isn't prepared for. You can start a league, own a franchise, draft players and

watch them develop into superstars, get banged up, and eventually retire. From official licenses to infinite camera-angles to accurate physics, this is the most thoroughly realistic sim on the market.

But watching the field can be painful. The terribly slow game engine makes the action appallingly jerky. The no-name announcer's play-by-play is truly painful. And while the thrust of this game is in calling the right plays

at the right times, the play-calling interface is nearly impossible to use.

Sadly, Sierra's done little more than dress up a tired engine. Make no mistake, this is still the most complete football-management sim going. But you'll need plenty of patience to keep playing.

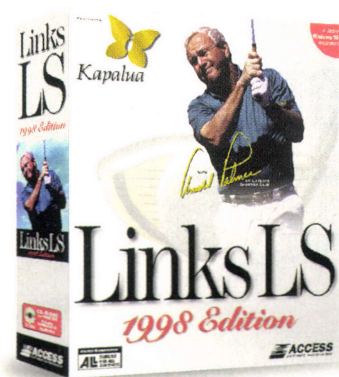
—Shane Mooney

The numerous camera-angles let you relive every brutal play to your heart's content.



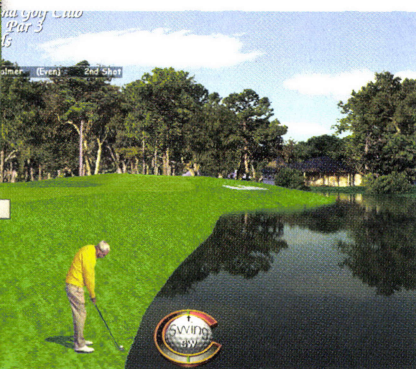
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|---|------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| FPS: FOOTBALL PRO '98 | GAMEPLAY: | C | C OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | C | |
| | GRAPHICS: | C+ | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | C+ | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | B- | |
| Great management, but it falls short in all the same places. | | | |
| DEVELOPER: Synergistic Software PUBLISHER: Sierra On-Line 800-757-7707 WEB: www.sierra.com PLATFORM: Win 95 CD REQUIRES: P75, 16MB RAM, 150MB HD, SVGA, 2x CD-ROM drive RECOMMENDED: P100, 32MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive STREET PRICE: \$30 | | | |

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East Front

By Peter Olafson

A fine first shot

In the battle of turn-based wargames, I'd credit East Front with a moderate victory overSSI's Panzer General II.

Both games offer picturesque maps that look more like something out of a real-time strategy game, an open structure, and a hex underpinning that isn't overbearing. East Front manages to convey a gritty feel—its turns almost seem like a technicality—and offers a particularly rational way of doing things. It's not just easy to grasp; it's *sensible*.

But, at the same time, I'd suggest that the kick-off entry in TalonSoft's Campaign Series is its own worst enemy. This re-creation of Nazi Germany's 1941-to-1945 campaign against the Soviet Union seems rather rushed.

East Front consists of about 50 scenarios—played either individually or arranged in eight campaigns. (Curiously, the period from September 1944 to May 1945—which includes some prime scenario material—is omitted.) You can make your own battles with a suite of editors or have the game cook one up according to your recipe. You can play either side at any level from battalion to corps (in the campaigns), and you can battle in virtually any fashion—either against a bright, aggressive computer opponent, or against another human in any of a wide range of link-ups.

The game itself is a deliciously edgy affair: It's essentially Capture the Flag with live ammo. The enemy AI is slippery, the animated units are just rough and realistic enough to make you feel you're watching the real thing, the battlefield reflects everything that's happened on it, and the rattle-and-roll sound effects are masterful.



The big picture of the German assault on Stalingrad.



A group of Russian T-34s prepares to cross the frozen Neva.

And then there's its sensitive rational side. I've never much liked the way wargames present numeric data—it floats unconnected in the air—but the game's creators have come up with a great anchor. They've arranged the key data around a windowed representation of the highlighted unit, and if the plain-English labels don't take, the consistency of each stat's position makes it memorable.

I suspect I'd be more annoyed had I bought East Front in a store. I didn't experience any technical problems within the program beyond an initial inability to put more than a minimal install on hard disk, and the occasional unit vanishing without explanation. (It also gets to be a pain to have to watch each unit move all the

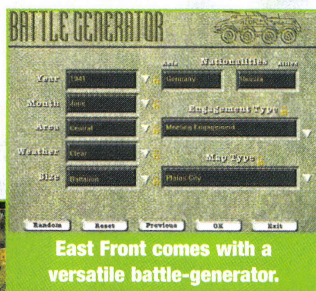
way to its new position before you can move another.) But this is probably because I spent most of my time working with the triple-patched v. 1.03. (A fourth patch was in beta

at press time—and that's to say nothing of the 16-player multiplayer upgrade promised in a package insert.) That's a lot of updating for a two-month-old game.

If only it were so easy to patch a manual. The 31-page document seems to have been written not so much about East Front as around it. It's OK as a rough guide, but it

lacks the critical detail that enables players to understand a game. Intuitive as East Front may be, I didn't begin to feel comfortable until I'd digested the 12-page "rules supplement." (Like the patches, it's available at TalonSoft's Web site.)

And even that document includes no perspective or designer notes—an odd omission, given the crew of distinguished wargame designers who contributed scenarios. I'd have been more impressed with more Russia and less rushin'.



East Front comes with a versatile battle-generator.

| | | |
|------------|------------------|----|
| EAST FRONT | GAMEPLAY: | B+ |
| | GETTING STARTED: | D |
| | GRAPHICS: | B+ |
| | SOUND CHECK: | A- |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | B- |

B
OVERALL

Turn-based historical strategy cleverly camouflaged in real-time looks.

PUBLISHER: TalonSoft
800-211-6504
www.talonsoft.com
WEB:
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: 486DX, 8MB RAM,
2x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: Pentium, 16MB RAM
STREET PRICE: \$55

TIPS ▼ For maximum realism, use the optional "extreme fog of war" rule. Essentially, this means you can't see any of the enemy's troops until you're right on top of them—or they open fire on you. ▼ This will make even aggressive players behave more tentatively, so you'll want to spend more time scouting enemy positions.

Tom Clancy's Politika

The Russians are coming!

As a Tom Clancy aficionado, I was delighted to learn last year that Mr. Clancy planned to enter the computer-entertainment market with a big splash. For the past 12 months, I've waited with anticipation for the first product. Well, the wait is over, and I can honestly say that I'm mortified.

In Politika, you jockey for political dominance in the Commonwealth of Independent States, assuming control of one of eight splinter factions that've emerged with the downfall of the socialist state and the supposed passing of Boris Yeltsin. To win, you must maneuver across 23 different political regions, garner financial backing, trade with other players, form alliances, backstab, incite uprisings, and directly challenge the



The small chat window doubles as an info screen that tracks each side's activities.

sovereign power of any local political opposition—all in order to dominate each region and gain the widest political acceptance by game's end.

Politika desperately attempts to invoke the same compelling gameplay and intense social interaction as Risk or Diplomacy. The problem isn't so much the insufferably dreary setting as the unappealing gameplay, which is about as dull as the thin coat of paint peeling on the hopelessly marooned Red Banner Fleet.

In addition to trading, you must also maintain financial reserves to purchase dice used to resolve each political challenge (in much the same fashion as Risk). Each encounter is logged in a chat window, which must be read, line by line, to determine how the game is progressing. Overall, the interface is a muddled and confusing batch of pop-up windows. Beyond that, precious little animation has been added to liven things up, while the sound effects are unintelligible and meaningless.

For all the hype surrounding the monolithic, multimillion-dollar Clancy franchise, Politika is

one of the biggest disappointments of the year. Dull, spiritless, and lacking the astute attention to detail that's been the cornerstone of every Clancy tome, Politika may best be described as the last rivet in the ignominious Iron Curtain. —Marc Dultz

STRATEGY



POLITIKA

GAMEPLAY: **D+**
GETTING STARTED: **C-**
GRAPHICS: **D+**
SOUND CHECK: **D-**

D+ OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **D+**

Tedious and uninspiring, Politika only serves to dilute the Clancy name.

PUBLISHER: Red Storm
800-565-8695
WEB: www.redstorm.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P100, 16MB RAM, 20MB HD, SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive, 14.4 modem
RECOMMENDED: P133, 32MB RAM, 8x CD-ROM drive, 28.8 modem
STREET PRICE: \$40 for full retail version; includes *Politika* novel

Great Battles of Hannibal

Your usual warfare, with elephants

The Carthaginian general Hannibal was the single greatest external threat Rome ever faced. Even after he was defeated and exiled from his native land, the Romans pressured every nation in which he sought asylum to expel him from its borders.

In this second game in the Great Battles series, the features and flaws of the first release have been effectively reproduced. There are a series of 11 historically accurate battle scenarios to play from either side, and a campaign mode that dresses up the independent scenarios while adding nothing to them.

Actions (unit movement, missile volley, shock combat, rallying, and so forth) are based on the initiative number of each individual leader within a "sphere of influence." Leadership initiative certainly makes for a strategically interesting game.

Hannibal's AI is great, and the battlefield rules are more extensive than before. Unfortunately, Alexander's system-requirement defects carried over as well—it took 45 seconds

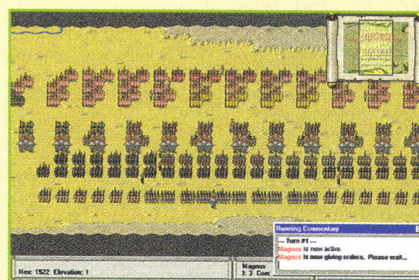
to load the first scenario on a 32MB P166.

This would be forgivable if the game's graphics were superb, but they aren't. Animation is slight and, during battle sequences, inane. Artwork is unimaginative: phalanxes and legions of multicolored saltshakers standing at attention.

You can engage in a multiplayer match using TCP/IP, modem, or IPX network connections. But don't expect map and scenario editors, or resource points with which to purchase different kinds of troops.

Kudos to I-Magic for its in-game, step-by-step tutorials. Both are well-organized, employing color and hotlinks to explain game terminology and structure in detail. Brickbats to I-Magic, too, for rendering its tutorials useless, because Hannibal can't be played while the tutorial window is visible.

Serious armchair commanders will enjoy Hannibal's excellent AI and interesting units, but there's precious little atmosphere or options to hold most players for long. —Barry Brenesal



The distant view of troops looks better.

HANNIBAL

GAMEPLAY: **C+**
GETTING STARTED: **C**
GRAPHICS: **C**
SOUND CHECK: **C-**

C+ OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **B**

Great AI—otherwise, nothing to send your ancient Roman blood racing.

DEVELOPER: Erudite Software
PUBLISHER: Interactive Magic
800-559-0434
WEB: www.imagicgames.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 65MB HD, SVGA, 2x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P166, 24MB RAM
STREET PRICE: \$50



Grade A "Play it: It goes where no Star Trek game has gone before"

—PC Games

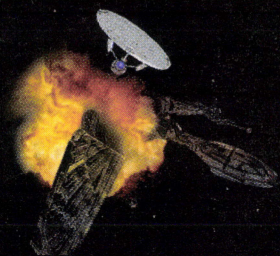
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—Ultra Game Players

4 out of 5 stars "It warps past any other Star Trek game"

—GamerzEdge

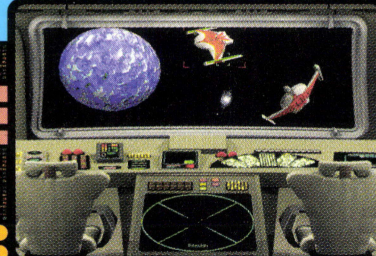
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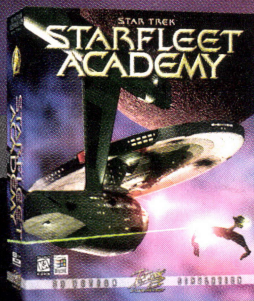
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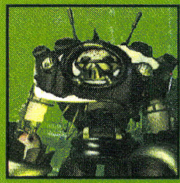
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Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain

Is that a MOO, too? Or just an echo?

By Daniel Morris

It's getting harder and harder to tell space-conquest games apart. The basic mold has been established by Master of Orion II, and so far there have been no developers willing or able to step beyond its neatly defined parameters. Though the MOO reduxes keep looking prettier and showing us cooler cut-scenes, the gameplay archetype isn't being even remotely challenged.

Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain is as guilty as any space-strategy game of late. A point-by-point description of gameplay would read like a Quick Start manual to MOO II. You



A very MOO-like star chart plots the path of your empire's growth.

begin play by establishing a fledgling empire, controlling one planet in a solar system that generally has three to five planets in its immediate orbit. Sounding familiar yet?

You select a race from the roster of utterly predictable species. (Look, a belligerent super-warrior race with hardly any research value! Look, a psychic spy race with fantastic research value! Look, humans, with straight-average attributes!) Or you can customize an alien race of your own, which isn't a very involving process and takes only about 20 seconds to do effectively.

Send a scout to a neighboring planet in your system and set up a colony (done with a gorgeous cut-scene—the cinematics throughout the game are first-rate), or spend a little time designing starfleets to suit your taste. Research utterly predictable technologies. (Gatling laser? Come on, man.) As you contact alien races, you'll engage in diplomatic feelers and make and break alliances. Watch clips of foreign diplomats either praising your nobility or cursing your progeny.

The combat system is so thoroughly derivative that it hardly bears describing. Usually you'll begin the game by amassing a bunch of destroyers (fairly low-power enforcers) and then upgrade to cruisers (which will eventually be the backbone of your fleet). Carriers haul fighter squadrons into the fray. And battleships, the prize dreadnoughts of space, chip in decisive power-plays.

The economic and resource-management models are extremely familiar, too. You're given a sector governor in charge of constructing new facilities, research, defense, and espionage. These AI governors run their sectors to the best of their ability, but naturally they require your supervision to operate at peak efficiency (and to ensure that they haven't been subverted by enemy spies). There's nothing in the entire resource-management package that we haven't seen before.

As tired as the entire game system is, there's no denying that Eminent Domain does it well. The art is impressive, and the screens are consistently interesting and relatively easy to navigate. The cinematics lend nice atmosphere. Some neat touches like Black Ops—espionage missions aimed at subverting or assassinating neighboring bureaucrats—keep gameplay from becoming too stale from turn to turn. Multiplayer options allow up to 16 players to go at it over Internet, modem, and LAN.

But ultimately, you never escape the nagging chagrin of having done all this stuff a dozen



Monitor the status of your colonies in the planetary-surface view.

times before in a dozen different space-empire sims. Ship design is particularly disappointing—slot for weapons, slot for drive, etc., etc., ad nauseam. Never do you feel the electric charge of having truly customized anything (your race included) in a surprising and unique way.

The time is ripe for a truly original and forward-looking space strategy to come and shatter this increasingly tepid genre. Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain is pretty and playable, but it's hardly progress.

| | | |
|------------------|----|---------------|
| GAMEPLAY: | C | C+ OVERALL |
| GETTING STARTED: | B- | |
| GRAPHICS: | B | |
| SOUND CHECK: | B- | |

MULTIPLAYER: C+

Quality production values can't justify this MOO knock-off's lack of originality.

DEVELOPER: Heliotrope Studios
PUBLISHER: THQ
Web: www.paximperia.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/DX4 100, 16MB RAM, 160MB HD, 2x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P133, 6x CD-ROM drive
STREET PRICE: \$50

TIPS Great battle trick: Use a cluster of cruisers or destroyers to launch a lopsided attack against one front of an enemy formation. If he swings a lot of ships around to meet the threat, bring in a few battleships held in reserve and clean up the weak side. Make sure enemy Black Ops teams aren't screwing with your governors and ministers. If these figures suddenly die, it's a safe bet they were assassinated. But if your economy is plummeting for no apparent reason, snoop around—chances are you'll uncover a governor who's been subverted. Replace the suspicious bureaucrat at once.



Pump research resources into the development of new gear, much like...well, any space-conquest game.

Lords of Magic

Swing high, swing low

By Barry Brenesal

STRATEGY



As the next game from the folks that brought us the hugely popular *Lords of the Realm II*, there was good reason to be excited about LOM's potential. Unfortunately, the final product doesn't quite live up to its pedigree. *Lords of Magic* doesn't look or feel like *LOTR II*. It plays like *Heroes of Might and Magic* most of the time—you control the turn-based strategic movements and actions of all party



Barracks, Thieves Guild, and Mage Tower—to create more powerful units. Or scout the surrounding terrain. Or protect against roving bands of renegades. Or spy on other religions. Or research new spells.

It's this well-balanced challenge of resource-management coupled with an ingenious spectrum of available development strategies that impresses most. Replayability is guaranteed by the choice of different starting faiths, fresh distribution of resources (and dungeons) across maps randomized with each new game, and the computer AI's tendency to form shifting alliance structures based on encounters, proximity, and resource needs. (You can also use the game's scenario editor to design your own maps.)

To win, you must acquire spells and/or units belonging to other religious disciplines by forming alliances with computer opponents and bartering with other players for spells, artifacts, army units—even buildings. (You can also form teams with human players. LOM supports up to four players via LAN, null modem, or IPX-compatible network.)

Visually, LOM is a very mixed bag. I like the landscape view a lot, with its guild structures and capitol that grow and change as you upgrade them. Combat visuals are problematic: While individual units are competently drawn, unit animations are among the choppiest in today's strategy games. Even worse, the 2D artwork and lack of perspective on the battlefield make it nearly impossible to follow the real-time, hand-to-hand action. Combatants



A typical paused battle-scene. The images are great—until they animate.

tend to cluster and overlap. It's hard to move them around, and you can't distinguish what's happening to any one unit. This is all the more unfortunate given that LOM provides bonuses for flank and surrounding attacks.

Poor combat AI is also a major shortfall. A single unit sent in the enemy's direction followed by a swift retreat brings your opponent's forces racing toward your waiting archers.

Assuming you don't mind these limitations, LOM can be quite immersive and fun. But strategic combat is something I relish in both turn-based and real-time games, and its poor performance here is a decided letdown.



Too bad more building interiors don't resemble the spell-learning library.

members. During combat, it morphs into a C&C clone, with real-time combat that's paused and started by hitting the spacebar.

It's all set in the land of Urak, amid the usual broad assortment of fantasy riffraff (elves, dwarves, lizardmen, etc.) following eight separate religions: Air, Fire, Water, Earth, Life, Death, Chaos, and Order. Under the evil sorcerer Balkoth, Death has unleashed a war for complete supremacy. It's up to you and the other faiths of Urak to determine who'll win.

You start by choosing a religion. (Forget about Death—you can only play Balkoth after you've defeated him.) The first major task is to liberate your people's Great Temple, which has been overrun by Death's followers. Free a few lesser locations first to acquire gold for purchasing mercenaries.

Now followers will flock to your capitol city's banner at the start of each week. Direct them to manufacture four different resources: Gems, Fame, Gold, and Ale. Alternatively, train some in one of the three local guilds—

The 2D buildings aren't very impressive.



LORDS OF MAGIC

GAMEPLAY: **C**
GETTING STARTED: **B**
GRAPHICS: **C**
SOUND CHECK: **B+**

C
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **B**

Doesn't quite make the grade.

DEVELOPER: Impressions Software
PUBLISHER: Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
WEB: www.sierra.com
PLATFORM: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P100, 16MB RAM, 140MB HD, SVGA, 4x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P166, 32MB RAM, 360MB HD
STREET PRICE: \$50

TIPS ▼ Scout the land with fast-moving armies as soon as you can. (Brownies are great, if you're playing Life.) They can find villages and other religion's capitol's quickly.



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Samite Healer ordered."
Computer Games Strategy Plus, June '97
★★★★

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PC Magazine, June '97
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Newsweek, April '97

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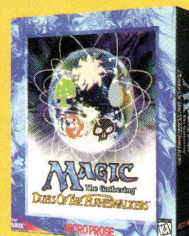
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Warhammer Epic 40,000: Final Liberation

By Barry Brenesal

STRATEGY



It seems like Orks never quit—at least, not in the Warhammer universe. You battled them to the edge of destruction in the Medieval fantasy Shadow of the Horned Rat; now they're back in the futuristic Final Liberation.

Don't confuse the products: they're quite different. Shadow was a real-time strategy wargame using a great many camera-angles, high-quality animation, and fantasy-based battle scenarios complete with a fireball-casting sword.

Final Liberation is a turn-based wargame based on Games Workshop's hugely popular Warhammer 40,000 board game. It uses a



A zoom-in on your troops reveals a bad case of pixelation.

conventional isometric perspective, and its graphics have that same sub-par feeling you get from a two-star hotel—the kind that has a sumptuous lobby and third-world rooms. Its 3D buildings grant cover, but you can't occupy the second floor of a two-story warehouse for a clearer shot at your foes, as you can in A Bridge Too Far. Specific terrains like desert, roads, and hills exist, but you'll search in vain for periodic sandstorms, landslides, or infantry lying in wait in caves.

Individual units look great in the Imperial Codex, Final Liberation's in-game encyclopedia, which displays images and background information with wonderfully atmospheric detail (it's our hotel lobby). During actual gameplay, though, the many differently armed and armored tanks for either side tend to look alike. Infantry units fare even worse, those on both sides resembling nothing so much as tiny hobbits trundling through an arcade landscape. The sound effects accompanying their move-

ments reinforce this image, and the grandiose musical theme (which quickly wears out its welcome) only heightens the sense of incongruity.

Final Liberation's tactical-battle options are a mixed bag. Units can entrench, move and attack, suffer suppression, and rally.

Terrain offers bonuses/penalties to sighting, movement, and rate of fire, but none to attack. Unused movement points convert into opportunity fire during your opponent's phase of the turn; there's no option to convert these same points into aimed fire, however. And while facing is important for armored vehicles, which typically have their heaviest plating in front, there's no bonus for flank attacks on infantry or surrounding a unit. Realistic it isn't—but then's the rules.

There are 40-plus scenarios to Final Liberation's campaign, all of them fought from the Imperial force's perspective. You keep all your surviving troops as you proceed from campaign battle to battle, but there's a catch: the Orks will eventually launch random counterattacks. The areas you control generate resource points that count toward new troop purchases and repairs, so it pays to leave some forces behind as you mobilize your Imperial Blitzkrieg.

Assuming that, like me, you really, really want to play the Orks, choose the Quick Battle option. It generates individual scenarios based on your choice of sides, terrain type, and resource points. Quick Battle also lets you pit four players against one another via a



Send poorly armored flyer units out to spot artillery, but keep them at a distance.



The Imperial Codex is the place to go for information about all units.

TCP/IP or IPX network connection, or two players via null modem. The AI is competent, but nothing a few devious humans can't blow away with some effort.

Which pretty much defines the game in its entirety. It just seems that few, if any, additional bits have been added to elevate this version beyond its board-game incarnation.

There's nothing in Final Liberation to rouse a cheer. If you're looking for a riveting turn-based strategy wargame, consider Warlords III or Emperor of the Fading Suns, and leave this one to diehard Warhammer fanatics.

FINAL LIBERATION

GAMEPLAY: **C**
GETTING STARTED: **A-**
GRAPHICS: **C**
SOUND CHECK: **C-**

C+
OVERALL

MULTIPLAYER: **B**

Nothing beyond the mildly effective.

DEVELOPER: Holistic Design
PUBLISHER: SSI
800-601-7529
Web: www.mindscape.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
REQUIRES: P66, 16MB RAM, 75MB HD, 2x CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED: P166, 4x CD-ROM drive
STREET PRICE: \$40

TIPS

▼ Don't worry about preserving the Space Marines you start with in the campaign's first battle. They're only around to get you going. ▼ Try to destroy enemy units, rather than letting them run off the battlefield when routed. They might get re-equipped and show up in a counterattack. ▼ Leaving several units poised in readiness for opportunity fire can be devastating for whatever enemy happens along.



Seven Kingdoms

By Barry Brenesal

More game than you can shake a scepter at...



World domination is in the gaming air. In recent months, we've seen Imperialism, Age of Empires, and another scenario compilation for Civilization II. Now Trevor Chan, the guy behind Capitalism and its Plus version, has unveiled his Seven Kingdoms—and it's arguably the most exciting of the group. It combines resource juggling, trade, diplomacy, and military might in a strategic real-time balancing act that's both highly engaging and visually attractive.

The essence of Seven Kingdoms is relationships—those formed with other kingdoms, independent villages, and your own people.



Battling independent villages may be a snap, but it does nasty things to your global reputation.

Trade, diplomacy, and reputation are the primary tools for achieving peace. Starting with one village and a single fort, you train your citizens to build and work in mines, factories, war factories, and towers of science. Over time, you spawn new villages, open markets, hire mercenaries, fend off revolts, subvert enemy subjects, coerce independents, build war machines, and send out caravans—becoming a very busy ruler, indeed.

Your popularity among your own people is of primary importance, and it's partially governed by how well you stock their markets with clay, iron, and copper products. Even if you don't have the good fortune to build a mine atop one of the few randomly distributed resource zones, you can still keep your citizenry happy (and your kingdom solvent) by signing trade treaties with your neighbors and sending caravans to their markets.

Eventually, trading partners will see the wisdom of signing friendly treaties. Especially friendly nations may form alliances, establish trade embargoes on other nations, request or lend one another economic assistance, and mutually declare war on a third party.

War in Seven Kingdoms results from many complex factors, but conducting it is always simple. You click and drag to form a group of your armies, and right-click on a location. Whether it's against an independent village, a declared enemy, or a Frythan lair, each unit in your forces attacks in the mode in which it works best. Persians use ranged weapons and Japanese use katanas, for instance.

Ah, the Frythans. Even when you're not at war with your opponents, there's still the looming threat of these nonhuman tribes. When set in defensive mode in the Options Menu, they're a threat only if attacked. In offensive mode, they breed—establishing new colonies and raiding human ones. Destroying Frythan settlements gives you considerable wealth, increased reputation, and occasionally a Scroll of Power. (These can be used to worship and invoke powerful Gods.)

Seven Kingdoms is one of the most configurable strategy games out there. There are several win conditions to choose from, including the takeover of all opponents, reaching a specific population or economic plateau, or destroying all the Frythan lairs. If you ever tire of the excellent computer-opponent AI, go

| Village | Population | Peasants | Loyalty | Reputation |
|---------|------------|----------|---------|------------|
| Zhuang | 88 | 28 | 88 | 88 |
| Jiang | 30 | 20 | 83 | 83 |
| Jiang | 10 | 2 | 100 | 83 |
| Cheng | 10 | 10 | 88 | 88 |
| Alun He | 60 | 52 | 87 | 87 |
| Si Jun | 57 | 49 | 86 | 86 |
| Bing | 24 | 24 | 86 | 86 |
| Angus | 9 | 1 | 83 | 83 |
| Araki | 10 | 10 | 78 | 78 |

| Unit | Cost | No. of Villages | Yearly Expense | Yearly Income |
|------------------|-------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Scout of Power | \$400 | 1 | \$400 | \$0 |
| Factory | \$100 | 7 | \$700 | \$0 |
| Iron | \$60 | 7 | \$420 | \$0 |
| Market | \$20 | 14 | \$280 | \$14,700 |
| Fort | \$60 | 13 | \$780 | \$0 |
| Mine | \$200 | 2 | \$1,200 | \$0 |
| Tower of Science | \$200 | 4 | \$800 | \$0 |
| War Factory | \$200 | 2 | \$800 | \$0 |
| Total | | 56 | \$5,000 | \$14,700 |

Click F2 to see at a glance all the races in every village you own, and their average loyalties.



The excellent online tutorials walk you through SK's intricacies quickly.

head-to-head against up to four other players using IPX or TCP/IP network, modem, or null-modem links.

The closest comparison to Seven Kingdoms would be Age of Empires, and frankly, there's no contest. The latter offers no true trade or diplomatic options with computer-driven players, no economics, and its movement AI is terrible. By contrast, Seven Kingdoms provides far more strategic elements, more challenging scenarios, and top-notch AI. If you have to choose, get this one.

SEVEN KINGDOMS

GAMEPLAY: A-

GETTING STARTED: A

GRAPHICS: A-

SOUND CHECK: B

MULTIPLAYER: A-

Mount the throne, make friends, stay alive.

PUBLISHER: Interactive Magic
800-559-0434

Web: www.imagicgames.com

Platform: Win 95 CD

REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 45MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive

RECOMMENDED: P166, 32MB RAM

Street Price: \$50

TIPS ▼ The race of the soldier who picks up a Scroll of Power determines the nationality of that God. Each one has different powers (the Norman Dragon casts fireballs, the Japanese Mind Turner inspires rebellion, and so on), so choose wisely. ▼ Peaceniks are rewarded. Your reputation suffers when you go to war with other kingdoms or independent villages, and especially when you attack caravans. Conversely, everybody likes kingdoms with high reputations. If your reputation is suffering, attack a Frythan lair (successfully!) for a quick boost.

A-

OVERALL

War Wind II

By Barry Brenesal

It ain't Kansas, Toto, but it sure looks good

STRATEGY



The original War Wind was more than your average real-time strategy game. Instead of two races battling it out for genocidal supremacy, it offered four races in 40 missions. Instead of identical units, buildings, spells, and resource costs on each side, everything was customized to the background of that race. It managed to garner a faithful following that should grow with this well-presented sequel.

The most noticeable improvement is WWII's highly textured, beautifully colored graphics. They leap out at you everywhere: from the menus, to each distinct warring faction, to the bubbling ooze of Yavaun's swamps, to the many distinctive flora and fauna that will greet and kill each of your troops in their own peculiar ways, given half a chance.

War Wind II's storyline involves six factions—humans having arrived, in typical fashion, to complicate matters. With the natives now coalesced into two broad groups and the humans split into two of their own (the hardboiled Marines and the technically inspired Descendants), there are still four sides, but you get to play with plenty of units, buildings, and dependencies from all six participating antagonists. Each is unique, and there's great variety within even the grunt types in different cultures.

In War Wind, you could work toward acquiring the services of a particular race's heroes, who'd show up on occasion. War

Wind II provides you with a choice of heroes at the beginning of many scenarios, each gifted with his own strengths. The scenarios themselves are detailed and interesting; an extensive in-game help database and excellent tutorials lower the learning curve.

War Wind II has a lot going for it: great graphics, tutorials, and interface; good music; a custom-scenario wizard; multi-player support for TCP/IP, modem, or serial connection (with different game goals); lots of units with individualized skills; six distinctive races; and four campaigns with branching events. Unfortunately, it also has a bug that significantly lessens the enjoyment factor.

The problem involves poor movement algorithms. When you select a group of units and direct them to a location, the last one sometimes bumps the unit in front of it and stops dead in its tracks. Rear guard units rounding building corners and foliage regularly freeze; and at no time can any unit mount a bridge without being personally maneuvered directly in front of it. (It's also impossible to direct a unit to erect an entire bridge. You have to issue separate orders for each bridge section.)

In a turn-based game when such a thing occurs (like the GO UNIT command in Civilization II), it's simply a nuisance. However, in real-time strategy games, it's dangerous to lose sight of the larger picture while micromanaging stumbling troops. While this dampens the pleasure of playing WWII, it doesn't cancel it out. You can always compensate by adjusting the game's speed and scenario difficulty. SSI has also mentioned a possible future bug fix.



The circuit board-like interface for the Descendants, a colony of techies.

So here's a qualified but uplifting cheer for War Wind II: Any company that can keep me interested in playing another C&C clone after I've written the review has something good on its hands; and right now, I'm off to resume control of my encircled S.U.N. forces.

WAR WIND II

| | |
|--|----|
| GAMEPLAY: | B |
| GETTING STARTED: | A- |
| GRAPHICS: | A- |
| SOUND CHECK: | B |
| B OVERALL | |
| MULTIPLAYER: A | |
| A bug or two away from excellence. | |
| <p>DEVELOPER: Dreamforge</p> <p>PUBLISHER: SSI</p> <p>800-601-7529</p> <p>WEB: www.ssionline.com</p> <p>PLATFORM: Win 95</p> <p>REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 30MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2MB graphics card</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: P120, 32MB RAM</p> <p>STREET PRICE: \$40</p> | |
| <p>TIPS ▼ Always set your leaders' stances to Evasive. Any other unit is expendable; if a leader dies, the game ends. ▼ A good time to use the more aggressive leader songs is right before destroying an enemy village. It'll speed destruction, replacing the influence your leader spends on singing.</p> <p>CHEATS ▼ During the game, hit Enter, type one of the following cheats, then hit Enter again. You'll see a message if you've done it correctly.</p> <p>!the sun also rises: reveals map.</p> <p>!the great pumpkin: win entire campaign.</p> <p>!golden boy: gives you 5,000 resources, 500 butanium.</p> <p>!i am the bishop of battle: win mission.</p> <p>!on a mission from gawd: fast building and resource-gathering.</p> | |



The Overlords battle for control of a village.

GAME SHORTS



Team 47 GoMan

Goes on and on...

Though never a true anime fan, I've always admired the hulking robots that dominate the genre. Team 47 GoMan lets you choose from five robots, each with its own weapons and stats. Your mission? To save the world! It's 2163, and the Children of Nemesis are out to destroy humankind. They're pretty smart monsters, too—they hit the biggest tourist traps in the world: San Francisco, Tokyo, and so on. Stop them from destroying key structures, or you fail your mission.

Playing in third-person, you can make

your robot perform all sorts of moves. Thrust, the coolest, allows you to move sideways or fly.

3D acceleration ensures nice graphics; unfortunately, this isn't enough to hold my interest. Killing monsters in New York is no different than in San Francisco, and you do it over and over again. But if you're crazy for anime, this may be a good way for you to kill some time.

—Danny Lam

PUBLISHER: Coconuts Japan Entertainment
415-561-0700
WEB: www.47-tek.com
PLATFORM: DOS/Win 95 CD
STREET PRICE: \$50



Twisted Metal 2

Demolition, man

Twisted Metal 2 offers everything you'd expect from a standard multiplayer-action arcade game (in this case, slugfests between killer vehicles). There are 12 vehicles and their respective kooky drivers; four battlefields in scenic locations around the world; a wide array of destructive devices; and a flimsy excuse for any of this to be happening. (It's an inspired near-future gladiatorial tournament this time.)

The level designs include obstacles, side-roads, ravines, ramps, and the assorted architectural gimmicks. Each vehicle has special moves and the usual trade-offs between speed, durability, and maneuverability.

Frankly, there isn't much distinguishing this one from the pack. Its interesting graphics are marred by a lack of



creativity, and gameplay is just too thin—no matter how many power-ups are lying around.

Though it's multiplayer-ready for up to eight players over the Internet, modem, and network, I can't imagine PC people being really excited about Twisted Metal 2 for more than half an hour, tops.

—Daniel Morris

PUBLISHER: Sony Interactive
WEB: www.sonyinteractive.com
PLATFORM: DOS/Win 95 CD
STREET PRICE: \$40



3D Ultra Pinball: The Lost Continent

Same ol' same ol'

Shoes should get better with age. Games, though, are probably better new, unless you're a fanatic or they're real cheap.

Which brings us to 3D Ultra Pinball: The Lost Continent, the third installment of Sierra's popular series. The Lost Continent uses the same engine as the other 3D Ultra games, maintaining all the features and physics that undoubtedly account for their popularity. However, this one doesn't thrill me. Its table designs are actually less innovative in many respects than its predecessors', and difficulty-level was nil, even on the hardest setting.

Don't get me wrong: The basic play was fine, as usual, with the coherent



target choices and level jumps typical of these games. But eventually, you need a sense that the ante's been upped. Sierra hasn't pushed the design here, apart from minor tweaks and a story straight from a 1940s jungle-movie adventure. If you don't have one of the 3D Ultras, this'll be fun; if you do, you may want to skip this one.

—Don St. John

PUBLISHER: Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
WEB: www.sierra.com
PLATFORM: DOS/Win 95 CD
STREET PRICE: \$43



Beat the House 2

No new tricks

I once won several hundred dollars at a Tahoe blackjack table, thanks in no small part to the card-counting tricks I learned in the original Beat the House. This edition offers a few graphic improvements and a couple more games, but it's really just

selling point is learning to beat the games.

The companion book by world-famous gambler Avery Cardoza contains most of the winning info you need. Read the section on blackjack card-counting, then practice your skills. The computer counts along, so you can compare notes. Also, there's a "genius tutor" who can recommend an action on every hand.

The graphics are a bit dated, and the animation for the slot machines isn't very smooth. But for those who don't mind learning a trick or two, BTH2's a safe bet.

—Shane Mooney



a slightly updated version of the great original.

In the virtual casino, you can play blackjack, mini-baccarat, craps, and slot- and video-poker machines, all realistically modeled—background hubbub and all. But the

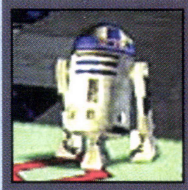
PUBLISHER: Interplay
800-486-3775
WEB: www.interplay.com
PLATFORM: DOS/Win 95 CD
STREET PRICE: \$40



Star Wars Monopoly

Use the dice, Luke

GAME SHORTS



Anyone toying with the idea of buying Star Wars Monopoly needs to consider this: There are two formats—a real-life board game and this interactive CD-ROM edition. The board game can be played all night at your kitchen table, where you can throw pretzels and random cooking utensils at your opponents when they make bad trades. The CD can be played all night over the Internet, minus the highly entertaining pretzel salvos and utensil jousting.

Han Solo hesitates before handing over his hard-earned credits.



The only real highlight of playing the disc version is its great graphics, from the ships to the 3D character models. Too bad the graphical treats slow game time so much I had to turn them all off after four or five games.

Getting started was no picnic, either. The game is cyberhosted by Anthony Daniels, who, as in the movies, plays the uptight C-3PO. But less than a minute into the dialogue, I wanted to rip his limbs off, Wookiee-style. Luckily, you can toggle his voice on or off. Besides pesky droids, the start-up interface is decent, clever, and 100 percent *Star Wars*.

When I play a *Star Wars* game, I want sound. I expect roaring CD-quality digital effects and music. So you can believe my shock when I heard beautifully orchestrated *Star Wars* music dubbed nightmarishly in MIDI. Sure, the game's roughly 50 percent CD-quality sound effects and music, but MIDI's simply an insult to every P90 this game targets as a base requirement.

Multipay via TCP/IP and IPX network is a fun way to kill time; and for the modem-equipped, there's www.zone.com, where you'll always find an opponent, day or night.

Just remember: any TRUE *Star Wars* fan will have to own both the CD-ROM and the board game.

—Nash Werner

| | | | |
|---|------------------|----|---------------------|
| STAR WARS MONOPOLY | GAMEPLAY: | C | B OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | C | |
| | GRAPHICS: | A | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | C+ | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | B | |
| For Monopoly and Star Wars fans, no less. | | | |
| PUBLISHER: Hasbro Interactive 800-638-6927 | | | |
| WEB: www.hasbro.com | | | |
| PLATFORM: Win 95 CD | | | |
| REQUIRES: P90, 16MB RAM, 50MB HD, 4x CD-ROM drive | | | |
| RECOMMENDED: P166, 200MB HD, 28.8 modem | | | |
| STREET PRICE: \$40 | | | |

VR Baseball Hardware Accelerated

The manager in *Bull Durham* was right. Baseball is, at core, the simplest of games: "You throw the ball, you catch the ball, you hit the ball." And that's VR Baseball's key virtue: For all its slickness and speed, it's appealingly basic.

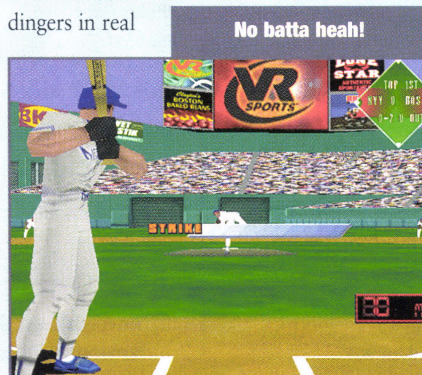
It's almost console-like in its accessibility and responsiveness to keyboard commands. And it has a zippy, positive, can-do air—no doubt a function of its required 3D accelerator. You throw, you catch, and you hit in batting practice, a Home Run Derby, exhibition play, or a full season.

There's still plenty of flash. Some of the parks are shiny and sharp, and you can twist the game into some glorious TV-like views. (I did run into some oddities, like the textured polygonal players all seeming to wear ferocious scowls.) It also has the best sound I've heard in a baseball game.

However, if you want something more complex, you may find that the game begins feeling underdone. You can only throw three pitches, and while you can aim, there's no

onscreen reticule to tell you where you're aiming. The trading system seems to have no AI at all. You can't save a game in progress, replay a spectacular catch, or check the standings—how can you have a league mode and leave out standings?

For that matter, the game still uses the base stats from the 1996 season (up-to-date '97 stats supposedly available at VR Sports' Web site still weren't available at press time). And how's it that bambino Mark McGwire, who clubbed 52 dingers in real



Get down to basics

life that year, couldn't even reach 30 over four simulated seasons?

But I did get him to send one moonshot 577 feet in the Home Run Derby. And that pleasure, like VR Baseball, was swift, intense—and quintessentially simple.

—Peter Olafson

| | | | |
|---|------------------|-----|----------------------|
| VR BASEBALL | GAMEPLAY: | C- | C- OVERALL |
| | GETTING STARTED: | B | |
| | GRAPHICS: | B+ | |
| | SOUND CHECK: | A | |
| | MULTIPLAYER: | N/A | |
| Simplicity spoiled by shallowness. | | | |
| PUBLISHER: Interplay 800-468-3775 | | | |
| WEB: www.vrsports.com | | | |
| PLATFORM: Win 95 CD | | | |
| REQUIRES: P120, 16MB RAM, 30MB HD, 3D card | | | |
| RECOMMENDED: P166, 32MB RAM | | | |
| STREET PRICE: \$40 | | | |



STRATEGY & TACTICS CHEATS

Wimpy? Wussie? Weak? No way! If you've always been one to knock cheats, you've missed out on the thrills of racing new tracks, playing new characters, and surviving fiery holocausts. But go ahead, do it the hard way—we'll be the ones having fun.

Need for Speed II: SE

Type the following codes at the main screen. (Note: Cheats are not available in multiplayer modes, so make sure your game is set to one-player/single-race or split-screen/single-race when entering a code. Unless otherwise noted, codes are only effective the next time RACE is selected and apply to both accelerated and non-accelerated versions.)

- pioneer:** Upgrades all cars to "pioneer" engines.
- slot:** Enables the slot-car-mode option on the player menus.
- mad:** Turns the smoke into "mad cows." (Accelerated only.)
- rain:** Enables weather in the non-accelerated game.
- chase:** Makes the computer cars go psycho and chase you if you're in the lead.
- kjones:** Rainbow car and horizon. (Accelerated only.)
- roadrage:** Don't like that car in front of you? Just honk!

The following codes (also entered at main screen) function as the shortcuts to winning the tournament and knockout. Once a code is entered, the new cars/track are permanently selectable from the front-end menus.

fzr2000: Enables all three bonus cars—Bomber, Tombstone, and FZR2000 (as if you'd won the tournament three times).

hollywood: Enables bonus track.

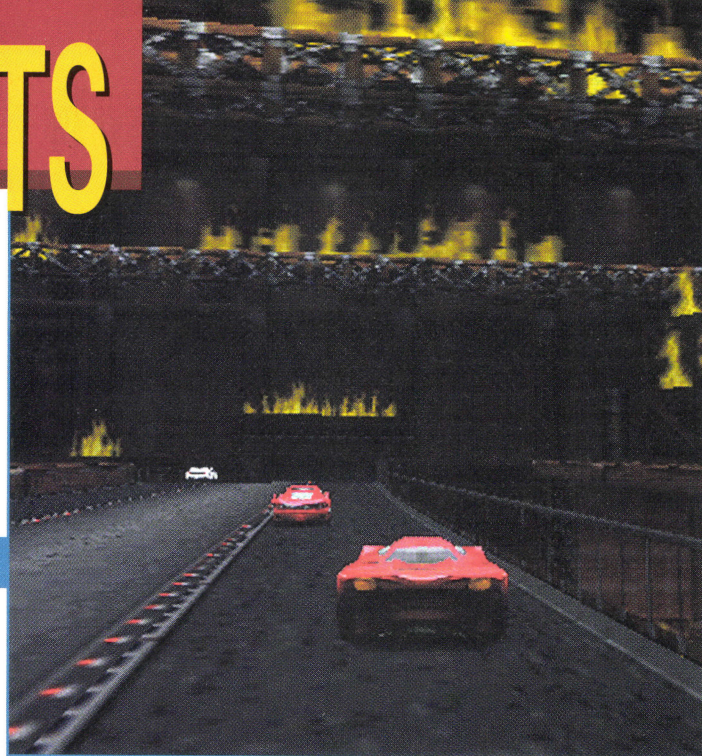
The following codes modify the traffic cars; thus, they are not available on the Proving Grounds track, and they require traffic to be set to On and opponents set to None or One.

- rushhour:** Lots of traffic.
- rexhour:** Lots of dino traffic.
- schoolzone:** Lots of school-bus traffic.
- madland:** A respectful tribute to the game's producer.
- vip:** Lots of limo traffic.

Typing **GO** plus a two-digit number from 18 through 51 allows you to drive traffic cars and objects from the game (e.g., GO20 = the school bus, GO43 = T. Rex, GO48 = log). Entering **rushhour** followed by a GO code gives you rush-hour traffic consisting of the object entered.

More cool stuff:

- Hold **n** during the loading screen to drive a track at night.



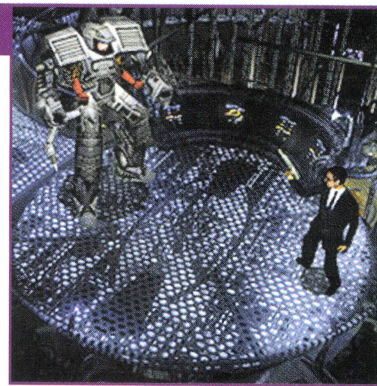
- Hold **Right Shift + C** during the loading screen for some additional camera modes.
- Hold **Right Shift + B** during the loading screen to replace the roof cam with a blimp cam.
- Hitting a moveable object at high speed in reverse while honking makes certain walls break away (on Mystic and Mediteraneo tracks only).
- As soon as a race starts, go into reverse behind the starting line and hit the emergency brake. This causes all the AI cars to go into psycho mode.

Men In Black

During the game (except at the very beginning—make sure you move Agent J away from the iron door), hit **Esc** to bring up the Options menu, then type **DOUGMATIC**.

You should hear a little "Rrring!" indicating the cheats have been enabled. Now hit **Esc** and type:

- protectme:** Invincibility.
- 4healme:** Full health.
- loadme:** Unlimited ammo.
- killme:** Kills all enemies in a scene.
- giveme:** Gives you all weapons.
- hq, newyork, arctic, underground, amazon, temple,**
- frales:** Takes you to headquarters/respective level of game.
- agentj:** Play as Agent J.
- agentk:** Play as Agent K.
- agentl:** Play as Agent L.



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PCGAMES

Reader Survey

PC Games needs you! Just take a few minutes and tell us who you are and what you think about PC Games. Your opinion matters—we believe you, our reader, can help make PC Games an even better magazine. Everyone who sends us a completed survey will automatically be entered into a random drawing to win one of 50 PC Games T-shirts or one of 10 PC games!

1. How did you obtain this copy of PC Games?

- ☐ Bought on newsstand
- ☐ Subscribed
- ☐ Given to me
- ☐ Other _____

2. If you bought this issue of PC Games, where did you buy it?

- ☐ Bookstore
- ☐ Supermarket
- ☐ Computer store
- ☐ Specialty software store
- ☐ Airport
- ☐ Other _____

3. Which part of the magazine most influenced you to buy this copy of PC Games? (Please "x" one answer only.)

- ☐ The cover image
- ☐ The cover lines
- ☐ The contents of the CD-ROM
- ☐ The feature story
- ☐ An exclusive story on a particular game
- ☐ A specific game review
- ☐ Hardware information
- ☐ Other _____

4. Please rate the following areas of PC Games between 1 and 5 in terms of usefulness, with 5 being the most useful and 1 being the least useful.

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| ___ Cover | ___ CD-ROM demo disc |
| ___ PC Games.EXE | ___ The Mercenary |
| ___ PC Games.com | ___ Feature Stories |
| ___ Incoming! (letters) | ___ Sneak Peeks |
| ___ GameWire (news) | ___ Game Reviews |
| ___ Online-Game Connection | ___ Cheats |
| ___ The Player | ___ Technobabble |
| ___ The Opponent | ___ Face-Off |

5. What topics would you like to read more about in future issues of PC Games?

- ☐ Gaming cheats/strategies/tips
- ☐ Interviews with gaming-industry professionals
- ☐ Gaming news
- ☐ Gaming hardware/peripherals
- ☐ Online games and gaming services
- ☐ Game previews
- ☐ Game reviews

6. What actions have you taken as a result of reading PC Games? (Please "x" all that apply.)

- ☐ Purchased a product based on a review or article
- ☐ Purchased a product based on an advertisement
- ☐ Requested more information about a product
- ☐ Visited a store/retailer to see products
- ☐ Recommended products or discussed them with someone else
- ☐ Entered a sweepstakes or contest
- ☐ Ordered a product online
- ☐ Visited a company's Web site

7. Did you purchase this copy of PC Games...

- ☐ With CD-ROM included
- ☐ Without CD-ROM

8. Which of these publications do you read regularly—that is, at least 3 out of every 4 issues? (Please "x" all that apply.)

- ☐ boot
- ☐ Next Generation
- ☐ Computer Games: Strategy Plus
- ☐ Online Game Review
- ☐ Computer Gaming World
- ☐ PC Gamer
- ☐ GamePro
- ☐ PC Games

9. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 13
- ☐ 30-34
- ☐ 13-17
- ☐ 35-39
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 40 or over
- ☐ 25-29

10. Besides yourself, how many other people read or look into your copy of PC Games?

Number of other readers: # _____

11. About how much time did you spend reading or looking into this issue of PC Games?

- ☐ Less than 30 minutes
- ☐ 30 - 59 minutes
- ☐ 1 hour - less than 1 1/2 hours
- ☐ 1 1/2 hours - 2 hours
- ☐ More than 2 hours

12. Education level completed?

- ☐ Graduate school
- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ College graduate
- ☐ Grade school only
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Other special training
- ☐ High-school graduate

13. Are you currently attending college? ☐ Yes ☐ No

14. Are you? ☐ Male ☐ Female

15. What is your total household income? That is the total combined income of all members of your household before taxes.

- ☐ Less than \$20,000
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,999
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,999
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$39,999
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$89,999
- ☐ \$40,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$90,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,999
- ☐ \$100,000 or more

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City/State/Zip _____

Daytime phone () _____

When you have completed this survey, tear it out, fold it in half, seal, and return to PC Games Publishing, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd. Ste. 700, San Mateo, CA 94404-1561, Attn. Marketing Department. Or, FAX to (650) 349-5259. Surveys must be postmarked by April 1, 1998.



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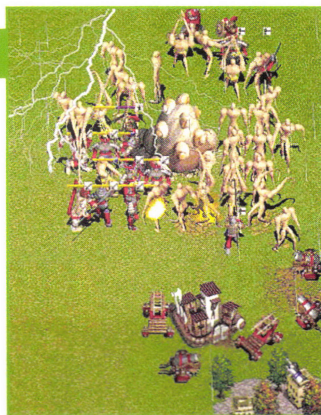
All winners will be chosen by random drawing from all completed surveys postmarked on or before April 1, 1998. Winners will be notified by phone or mail on or about April 30, 1998. No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited by law.

Thanks for your participation.

Seven Kingdoms

To enable the cheat mode (which will reduce your score to 0 and label you a Cheater), type **!!!@@@###**, then hit one of the following keys:

- c**: Gives you \$1,000.
- **: Gives you 1,000 food reserves.
- t**: All tech advances and scrolls.
- m**: Reveals map.
- ;**: Increases population of a random nationality in the selected city.
- =**: Increases prayer points in selected Seat of Power.



- b**: Finishes construction of selected building immediately.
- Z**: Toggles fast-build mode.
- u**: King is immortal.

Turok

Enter these codes at the cheats menu:

- LLSNMRTN**: Invincibility.
- JFFSPNGDNBRG**: Infinite lives.
- MGRLSGTM**: All weapons.
- RHNSRLL**: Unlimited ammo.
- TRNTNNO**: All maps.
- DGHTTSRS**: All keys.
- TKMDKK**: Show enemies.
- PTLFGNDS**: Level 1 Warp.
- QTMBS**: Level 2 Warp.
- GTMNDSBF**: Level 3 Warp.
- NCPGHM**: Level 4 Warp.
- RSTPDFRPL**: Level 5 Warp.
- NBCD**: Level 7 Warp.
- LFRRSPR**: Level 8 Warp.
- CRCDND**: Longhunter Warp.



- CTNTSCND**: Mantis Warp.
- THSFNDNT**: Trex Warp.
- HSTSMN**: Campaigner Warp.
- HTSDNM**: Gallery.
- LRNMSNHR**: Show credits.
- MBRNKLSN**: Spirit mode.
- HFLTHSH**: Tiny enemy.
- PRMSHN**: Big heads.
- BGGNTSS**: Disco mode.
- KNTSFSKS**: Fly mode.
- CRLSFNDNGS**: Purdy colors.
- GSRCGKFS**: Quack mode.

Streets of SimCity

During the game, press **Ctrl + Alt + x** to access the cheat-code dialog box, then type one of the following codes. Note: Cheats are case-sensitive and work only in Player's Choice mode or with imported SimCity games.

- moon, mars, earth, jupiter**: Codes make game's gravity equal to their namesake.
- mr fabulous**: Makes player's vehicle invulnerable.
- im back**: Repairs all vehicle damage.
- lock and load**: Refills ammo.
- beefcake beefcake**: Full weapons, full ammo.
- cruise control**: Activates cruise control.

Worms 2



Enter these level passwords at the Passwords screen:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. ONCEUPONA | 33. TROUBLEOF |
| 2. TIMETHEREWERE | TRANSLATING |
| 3. SOMESMALLWORMS | 34. WORMS2INTOBUTWE |
| 4. WHOGOTVERYVERY | 35. DIDNTHAVETIMETO |
| 5. ANNOYEDAND | 36. TRANSLATETHESE |
| 6. DECIDEDTO | 37. PASSWORDSNOTTHAT |
| 7. GOTOARMSIN | 38. THEYNEEDTOBEDONE |
| 8. ORDERTOWIPE | 39. WESUPPOSETHAT |
| 9. OUTTHEIR | 40. YOUAREREALLY |
| 10. VICIOUSENEMY | 41. EXPECTINGTO |
| 11. COUNTERPARTS | 42. SEEAWONDERFUL |
| 12. THEYDEVELOPED | 43. CHEATMODEWHEN |
| 13. SOMEREALLY | 44. FINISHTHEMISSIONS |
| 14. COOLWEAPONSSUCH | 45. ANDYOUARERIGHT |

QUICK BITS

Dark Earth

During the game, press **P** to pause, then type **FORTYTWO** (case-sensitive). You'll see the message "Easy Mode On." You can now hit **Ctrl-D** to refill Arkhan's life gauge and **D** to knock an opponent's life to 1.

Twisted Metal 2

At the car-select screen, type **gloriousicecream** to become Sweettooth. During the game, type **glorious**, then **2hot** to get homing napalms.

- 15. ASBANANABOMBS
- 16. ANDMAGICBULLETS
- 17. THEYTRAINED
- 18. ALLNIGHTAND
- 19. EVERYDAYSOHEY
- 20. WOULDBECOME
- 21. PROFICIENT
- 22. INTHEIRWORMLY
- 23. WAYSSOMETIMES
- 24. THEYWOULDSHOOT
- 25. GRANNIESJUST
- 26. FORFUNANDLAUGH
- 27. ABOUTITINTHE
- 28. EVENINGTIME
- 29. WEAPOLOGISEON
- 30. BEHALFOFALLTHE
- 31. TERRITORIESHAT
- 32. WEWENTTOTHE

How Much Pentium Can You Afford?

By the *PC Games* Staff

Okay, we heard you. You're pissed about how quickly your super-fast Pentium became a slow mule. And yes, we're tired of answering questions about how well Quake II will run on a P120 without a 3D card. The answer is: Poorly. Like most gamers, we don't like to waste our money, but having to upgrade our systems isn't a choice; it's a question of how much we can afford. Since one gamer's hardware budget is another gamer's college tuition for a year, we decided to have a look at four new systems ranging from \$1,050 to \$8,000. There isn't a P200 or lower in the lot, so we're not talking last year's hand-me-downs. These speedy systems top out at a pair of 300MHz Pentium IIs.



RATING: B+

Techmedia Media Pro Plus

We've heard a lot about AMD's inexpensive yet powerful K6 CPU. As an alternative to Pentiums and Pentium IIs, local garage-shop computer makers have been selling tons of K6 systems, but mainstream computer makers have been slower to embrace the K6.

Techmedia sits someplace in between Compaq and the hardware guy with the shop down the street. It's big enough to be sold through beefy regional chains such as Fry's, yet small enough to experiment with new trends.

The K6-233 is a great CPU. Using the same motherboard as a P233, it will clock bench-

marks between the P233's and a PII 266's. The K6's one failing is its slower floating-point unit (FPU) processing. In GLQuake, the difference will cost you about 5 fps compared to the P233. But in GLQuake II, you'll see no difference in frames at all. Where Direct3D games are concerned, you'll probably even see frame rates that outpace PIIs, with Jedi Knight turning in a minimum of 55 fps on this system.

The Media Pro Plus is a great system for the money. For \$1,050, you get 32MB of EDO RAM, a 4.2GB hard drive, a fast STB Nitro 3D video card, a 24x CD-ROM drive, and USB ports. True, you can get a K6 system with a faster motherboard and memory, but a \$1,050 buy-in also allows you the luxury of getting an up-to-date 3D accelerator. What's more, Techmedia doesn't load a ton of worthless software onto its systems that you'd have to weed out anyway. The Media Pro Plus' one major fault is that its Pioneer CD-ROM drive is one of the noisiest we've ever heard. But if you're looking for a significant speed upgrade from your P120 at a budget price, you can't go wrong with this box. (Techmedia; 800-379-0077; www.techmedia.net; street \$1,050)

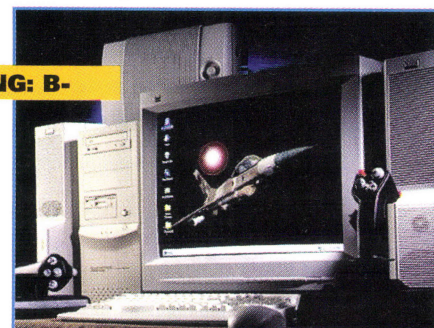
HOW FAST IS IT?

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Processor Score: | 136 |
| Video Score: | 227 |
| Hard Drive Score: | 141 |

Falcon Mach V • P233

We've admired and praised Falcon Northwest for years, in part because this company was one of the first to cater to hardcore gamers with their custom, build-to-order Mach V systems. They've won our Editors' Choice award for two years running.

So why the B- for this system, Falcon's entry-level box? Cost. Sure, the P233 MMX comes with a speed-tweaked motherboard,



RATING: B-

Diamond Viper and Canopus Pure3D cards, swank speakers, a CH joystick, 32MB of RAM, a Sportster 56.6K x2 modem, and plenty of bells and whistles—but it rings in at \$2,495, more than twice as much as the Techmedia reviewed above. The Falcon has about \$600 worth of quality components not found in the Techmedia, but components are getting easier to install while dropping in price. It's time Falcon low-end system prices dropped as well.

That said, this machine did perform admirably when we put it through its paces. It screamed through Jedi, recording frame rates consistently between 40 and 60, dropping below 20 only occasionally. GLQuake frame rates were also adequate, with time-demos of demo1 and demo2 at 32 fps and 30 fps, respectively. Quake II demos were in the 20-to-22-fps range.

But there's concern about the life of any non-Pentium II system. While this year's games don't take full advantage of PIIs and their accelerated graphics port (AGP) bus, surely next year's will. You'd be a bit steamed to buy this PC now and feel obligated to buy a PII next Christmas. (Falcon Northwest; 888-325-2661; www.falcon-nw.com; street \$2,495)

HOW FAST IS IT?

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Processor Score: | 155 |
| Video Score: | 199 |
| Hard Drive Score: | 171 |

Sony PCV-240

Of the four machines here, the Sony PCV-240 is most typical of top-tier consumer PCs—loaded. With a PII-300 CPU with MMX, 64MB of

RATING: B



SDRAM, a 24x CD-ROM drive, 512K L2 cache memory, an AGP version of ATI's Rage Pro 64-bit 3D graphics card, and a 6.4GB hard drive, this Sony can certainly handle all your general gaming needs with relative ease.

Except, that is, if you want to play GLQuake II—and who doesn't? At press time, there wasn't driver support for OpenGL for the ATI Rage, but it's on the way. However, the machine did turn in a respectable 20 fps average in Quake II in 800-by-600 resolution, which ain't too shabby. With Jedi

Knight, the Sony turned in respectable frame rates between 40 and 80 in D3D. G Police simply screamed on the machine, with AGP effects such as animated billboards in the background (whoopee!).

The system comes with extras that gamers may like but not need, such as video-capture and editing software, front-mounted AV connectors for a camcorder, and an integrated TV tuner (which is fun to have). It also has an internal Zip drive.

At just under \$3,000, the PCV-240 is a bit pricey, considering you don't get a monitor, speaker, joystick, and so on. But what you do get is a fast, solid, well-rounded machine. (Sony Electronics; 800-476-6972; www.sony.com; street \$2,999)

Falcon Mach V • Pentium II

RATING: A

It's almost not fair to have this system in this roundup—it's one tricked-out beast, as well it should be for \$8,000.

It has not one, but two Obsidian Voodoo accelerators. It has a Diamond Monster Sound card. It has an internal Zip drive. This lightning-

fast PII 300 even has a whopping 128MB of RAM. It's the sort of system you think Bill Gates has tucked away in the back of his cave for when he wants to do a little gaming.

We did a lot of gaming, and man, does this machine fly. GLQuake demos clocked in at 62 fps (a time-refresh at the entrance to e1m1 left us giggling: 133 fps). Jedi was usually between 40 fps and 60 fps—it never dipped below 25 fps no matter how many blaster shots and rockets filled the air. Quake II (at 640-by-480) cranked at 45 fps; it even played smoothly at 800-by-600.

We all wanted to smuggle this puppy home, but it wouldn't fit under our coats. (Falcon Northwest; 888-325-2661; www.falcon-nw.com; street \$8,000)

HOW FAST IS IT?

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Processor Score: | 246 |
| Video Score: | 168 |
| Hard Drive Score: | 226 |

HOW FAST IS IT?

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Processor Score: | 244 |
| Video Score: | 301 |
| Hard Drive Score: | 311 |

*PC Games Labs uses a standard Acer 200MHz Pentium as a baseline system for comparison, with baseline benchmarks of 100 in processor, video, and hard-drive categories. Computer systems are compared using WinBench 97.

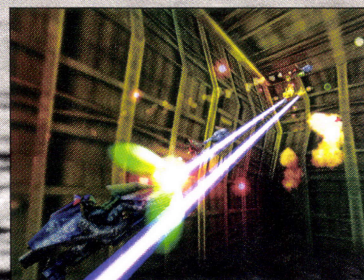


Wondering what hardware to buy to get the best game machine for your money? It's easy: just check PC Games' running list of our top hardware recommendations. Each month, we'll update the Hall of Fame as we review new products.

| CATEGORY | PRODUCT | DETAILS | OUR RATING |
|---------------|---------------------------|---|------------|
| PC | Falcon Mach V | Falcon Northwest; 800-258-6778; approx. \$4,000 | A |
| Monitor | Optquest V775 17-inch | ViewSonic; 800-888-8583; approx. \$600 | A |
| CD-ROM drive | FX240 | Mitsumi; 714-648-7861; approx. \$199 | A- |
| Sound card | AWE64 | Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; \$129 | A |
| Speakers | ACS55 Power Gaming System | Altec Lansing; 800-258-3288; approx. \$150 | A |
| Joystick | F-16 Combatstick | CH Products; 619-598-2518; \$69.95 | A+ |
| Gamepad | SideWinder Gamepad | Microsoft; 206-882-8080; \$39 | A+ |
| Modem | SupraExpress 336i SP | Diamond; 800-727-8772; approx. \$125 | A |
| Graphics card | Stealth 3D 2000 Pro | Diamond; 800-727-8772; approx. \$160 | A |
| Key add-ons | Pure3D | Canopus; 888-868-2533; approx. \$165 | A |
| | Monster Sound 3D | Diamond; 800-727-8772; approx. \$199 | A |



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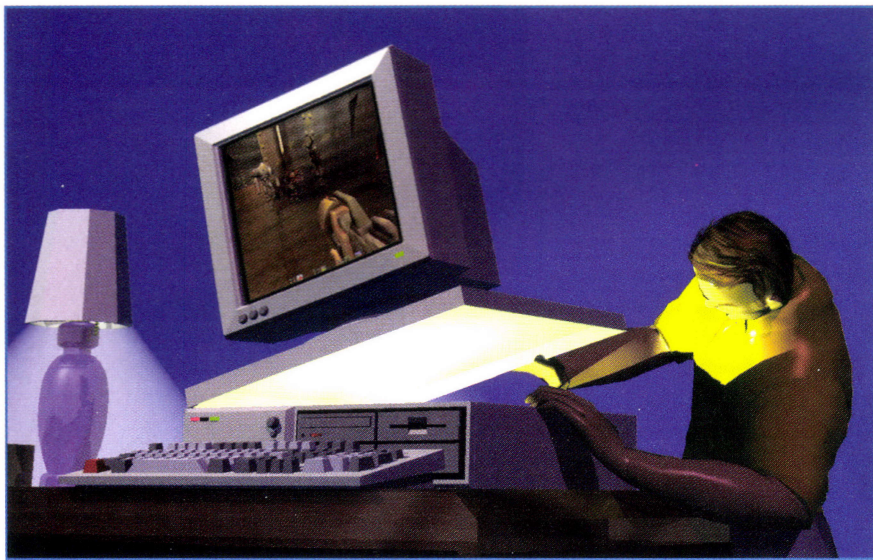


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Changing Your Motherboard

By David Gerding



You say you're all ready to upgrade your P90 to a P200? You want USB ports (for when there's finally a selection of USB sticks!)? A motherboard upgrade may be your only solution, short of buying a new computer. That's important for gamers contemplating expensive new options—like an AGP slot, which is now only on Pentium II-based systems—promising the fastest PC graphics cards on the planet. Other upsides include the latest “Ultra 33” fast-IDE access.

Here are the most basic things you need to ask yourself when choosing a motherboard: what CPU-type and what kind of chassis (the case your motherboard will sit in) do you want?

If you're the kind of hardcore gamer willing to swap motherboards, your only real choice is a board with a slot 1 port for a Pentium II chip. Of course, you'll need a Pentium II-based system from which to scavenge the CPU, or you'll have to go out and buy one, if you're building a system from scratch. Motherboards that support Pentium IIs can't support older Pentiums, and vice versa. For those of you who dual-boot between NT for work and 95 for games, the top-of-the-line motherboards are dual-processor, with all the bells and whistles.

Understanding the Chassis

Until recently, there was only one kind of chassis—the old AT design. Intel came out with a new motherboard design called ATX that's smaller and offers some new tricks, like automatic power-down so the machine can shut itself off. If you go with ATX, you're getting the latest and greatest, but you'll pay more for the case and the power supply. If you plan on using your older AT case, you must get an AT motherboard. Both the chassis and power supply are specific: they either support ATX-style motherboards or AT—never both.

Out with the Old and In with the New

Detach all cables, especially any and all power sources from the PC. We recommend working with an anti-static bracelet, which you can get at your local computer superstore. Read the manual that came with your replacement board from cover to cover. You'll need to set jumpers on your new board to configure it to work with your CPU.

Open up your old PC and remove all the adapter cards. Make a map of which cards went where and which cables led where. Do the same for the wide-ribbon cables connecting

your floppy and hard drives. You'll need to reattach everything just as it was.

If you're scavenging the CPU, remove it now and put it in one of those mylar anti-static bags for the time being. Remove all the screws holding down the motherboard and set them aside carefully. If there are little plastic bolts sticking up from below still holding the board in place, use needle-nose pliers to pinch them, allowing you to lift the motherboard. Work gently to remove the old motherboard.

Take out your new motherboard and align its slots with those in the back of the chassis. Lower the board to align it with the metal risers. These will anchor your board to the case when you put in the screws. Some motherboards also use expanding plastic bolts to hold them in place. Don't position these until you're ready to put your board in place for good, because removing the motherboard once the bolts have locked is tricky. When the board is properly aligned, secure it with screws and the plastic bolts if necessary. Many ATX boards only use screws, which is one of their benefits. Take out your CPU and install it on the new board.

Close It Up

Reattach all the drive cabling first, making sure the cables are aligned exactly as they were. Then reinstall the rest of your adapter cards and cabling. Attach the power supply to the motherboard next to last; and, as the very last step, attach the main power cord. If it's a baby AT case, make sure the two black wires on the two motherboard power-supply plugs are on the inside.

Power up the PC, go directly into the BIOS, and configure the system to recognize your drives. When you boot back into Windows, make sure you go to the Add New Hardware section in the Control Panel and select Find New Devices, so that Windows 95 can find any new system resources on the motherboard.

Congratulations, you're done.

Gamer 3D

RATING: B-

PC Games has been praising the Voodoo chipset for over a year, so I thought to myself, What more could I say in yet another review? Well, when you've got a good product to talk about—and Guillemot's Gamer 3D is very good—you stick with the facts.

While it may seem like Guillemot is late to the party with this accelerator, the card has been on sale in Europe for months. Like Diamond's Monster 3D, the Gamer 3D runs alongside your current 2D card—

average of 32.4 fps installed on a P200 with 32MB of RAM, running alongside a STB Velocity 128. Installation was problem-free, and all the 3D games I tested ran without a hitch. This \$190 card is bundled with full versions of Ubi Soft's POD and Sub Culture, which allow you to take full advantage of its 3Dfx power.

Six months ago, this accelerator would've earned an A. But compared to Canopus' Pure3D Voodoo card, which packs an extra 2MB of texture memory for less money, the Gamer 3D isn't as good a deal. That said, if you buy this card, you won't be disappointed.

Excuse me, I have to go play the 3Dfx version of FIFA 98. (Guillemot; 800-967-0863; www.guillemot.com; street \$190)

—Marcale Wallace



adding that extra power needed to play GLQuake and all the other current 3D-accelerated games. The Gamer 3D snaps in like a champ and comes equipped with the customary set of drivers: the older Glide 2.3 Runtime drivers and Voodoo 2.08 D3D drivers. After a quick trip to www.guillemot.com/uk/index.html, I was able to locate an update that adds display properties to the control panel in Windows 95.

Now, at first glance, you might say Guillemot's Voodoo card closely resembles the Monster 3D, and you'd be right. Looking at both would leave you hard-pressed to tell the difference. Both use 2MB of frame-buffer memory and 2MB of texture memory, and both support most 3D APIs, including Glide, Direct3D, Argonaut Brender, Criterion Renderware, and Gemini OpenGVS.

Using the GLQuake time-demo test, the Gamer 3D screamed through with an

Total 3D 128V

RATING: A-

I've been messing around inside PC cases for a long time, but I don't think there's ever been a time when gamers have had such a huge selection of exceptional video controllers to choose from. Some of the best all-round cards to debut in 1997 were those based on the RIVA 128V 3D graphics engine from nVIDIA. Here at PC Games, we like the RIVA 128V. This swift, robust chipset has already surfaced on STB's Velocity and Diamond's Viper V330 cards, and most recently on Canopus' Total 3D 128V.

If you're looking to buy one video card with exceptional 2D/Direct3D performance plus sterling VESA hardware support, look no further than the Total 3D 128V. In terms of video performance, the Velocity, Viper, and Total 3D 128V are virtually identical. All three cards feature the same 128-bit graphics and 4MB of fast SGRAM, but Canopus continues to show its penchant for fiddling with the specs. Just as Canopus

went with 4MB of texture memory instead of the standard 2MB on its Pure3D Voodoo accelerator, the board maker has significantly enhanced the video-out performance on the Total 3D 128V. If hooking your computer up to the big screen in the family room to play NBA Live 98 is important to you, read on.

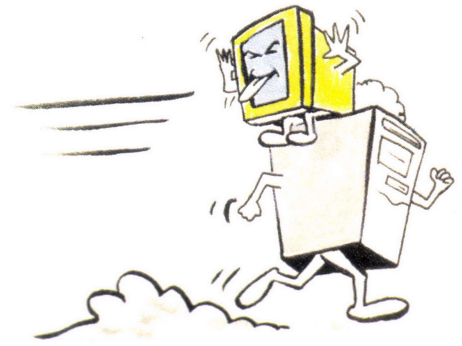
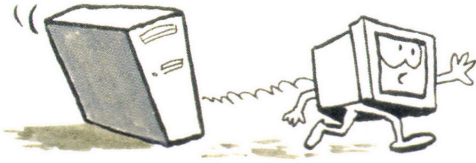
The Total 3D 128V differs from the Velocity and Viper in that it can run at 60Hz non-interlaced through its video-out port, compared to the Viper's and Velocity's 30Hz interlaced mode. Canopus claims the extra horsepower raises frames-per-second maximums from 30 fps to 60 fps for faster, smoother TV-screen gameplay—depending on whether your TV has a line-doubler—and it makes 800-by-600 resolution possible. The difference also allows the Total 3D 128V to deliver simultaneous monitor and TV signals; its competitors can only emit one or the other. Lastly, Canopus has also added a video-in port not present on the Viper or Velocity.

Canopus' drivers installed and cohabited within Win 95 flawlessly, and there were no problems running anything from Jedi Knight to Total Annihilation. There were also no conflicts running the card in tandem with 3D accelerators.

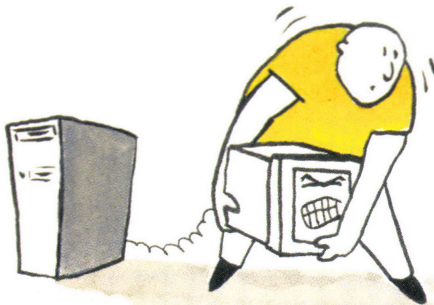
Should you care about video-in and video-out features? My gut-level feeling is that few gamers will have the need or inclination to fork out the extra 30 bucks. But if video features are a must, this is the card for you. (Canopus; 888-868-2533; www.canopuscorp.com; street \$229)

—George T. Chronis

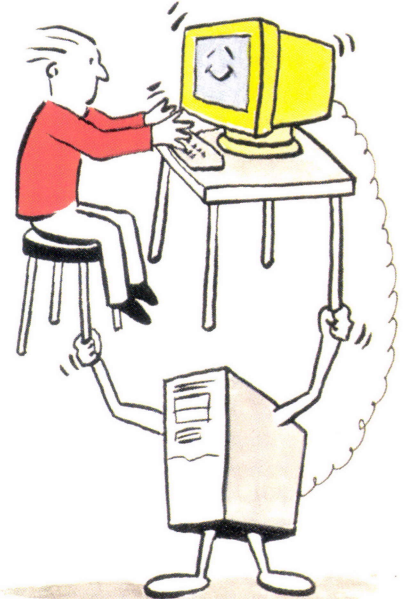
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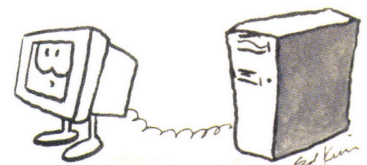


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TECHNOBABBLE S.O.S.

DSVD modems, system upgrades, and that damn DirectX

By Patrick Marshall

Q I've been having problems playing games that require DirectX. Every time I exit the game, my monitor turns blank, and there's a little blinking line on the far-left corner. I've tried everything from reinstalling the DirectX drivers to getting every single version to just pressing every single key on my keyboard in hopes that it might solve my very annoying problem. But alas, nothing helps. I don't really like restarting my computer every time I exit a game.

Alfred Thomas Torres

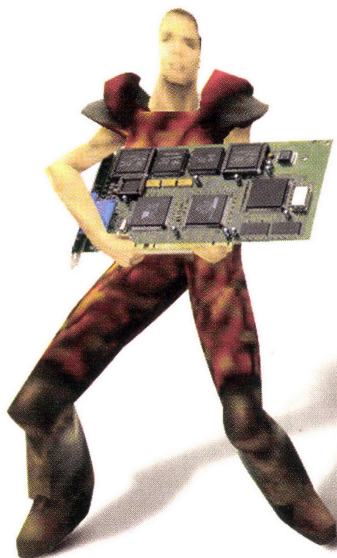
Via email

A Count yourself lucky: at least you're able to play the games. Fact is, DirectX—while a boon to those who want to play games under Windows—causes more than its share of problems for users.

First, a little background for those not familiar with it. DirectX is a programming interface developed by Microsoft. It allows game developers to create Windows drivers that can directly access hardware when displaying graphics, playing audio, and implementing other multimedia features. The result is faster, smoother performance than was possible when drivers had to go through the Windows graphics-device interface (GDI). As far as your graphics adapter is concerned, the critical part of DirectX is DirectDraw, which allows the game to directly access your graphics adapter to perform certain kinds of screen-drawing operations. A DirectX driver is generally installed on your system by a game that was designed to take advantage of it—automatically substituting itself for your video driver. Problem is, not all graphics adapters are fully compatible with DirectX. What's more, there are now five different versions of DirectX, and graphics adapters that were compatible with earlier versions may not be fully compatible with later versions.

Unfortunately, you didn't mention what graphics adapter you're using, nor did you specify what version of DirectX is currently installed on your system, so I'll have to keep my recommendations general. First, check with the company that makes your graphics adapter to make sure the card is compatible with the version of DirectX you've installed, or find out

whether the company has an updated driver. Or, you may be able to get away with reinstalling your original video driver and then installing the last version of DirectX that's compatible with your card. Of course, once you've done that, games written for later versions of DirectX may not run properly. If that doesn't solve your problem, it's time to shop for a new graphics adapter. Just make sure to look for DirectX 5.0 compatibility, since that's the version currently shipping.



Q We recently bought a Supra Express 33.6 DSVD modem. It usually works great, but sometimes it won't find a dial tone. I know all the phone lines are hooked up right because when I plug the phone into my computer, there's a dial tone. It will work one minute, and 10 minutes later—POOF! Please tell me what the problem might be and how I can fix it.

Luke

Via email

A One way or another, your problem almost certainly stems from a bad connection between the modem and the phone line. It could simply be a matter of the connectors on either end of the cable being loose or damaged. Or something could be damaged inside the modem.

There are two other potential causes. First, you may have too many other devices on the

same phone line, making the detection of an adequate dial tone touch-and-go for your modem. Secondly, if you have the kind of voice mail that changes the dial tone to a stutter tone, the modem will not recognize it. If this turns out to be your problem, you can get around it by adding commas to the dialing string so that the modem pauses long enough for the stuttering to finish.

Q I recently upgraded from a 486 to a Pentium 80 by adding the Intel Overdrive processor. However, compared to my father's P75, my upgraded system runs a lot slower, even though they both have 16MB of RAM. I was wondering if this is normal.

Brian

Via email

A Alas, your experience is normal. That's why I generally recommend against using that particular upgrade option. You'll get faster performance than you were getting with your old 486, but since that new Pentium chip is sitting in an old 486 motherboard, you won't get the same performance as a true Pentium system using a slower Pentium processor. Fact is, the support chips on your 486 motherboard aren't quite up to what you'll find on a Pentium motherboard. And most 486 motherboards employ the ISA bus for communicating with add-on cards such as your graphics adapter, which is going to be slower than the PCI bus and graphics adapters in Pentium motherboards. My recommendation: If you're willing to spend the bucks for an Overdrive processor, why not spend another \$200 and get a PCI motherboard? Of course, you'll also have to spend another couple hundred dollars on a PCI graphics accelerator, but the end result will be much more gratifying.

Mail or email your queries to the S.O.S. staff at:
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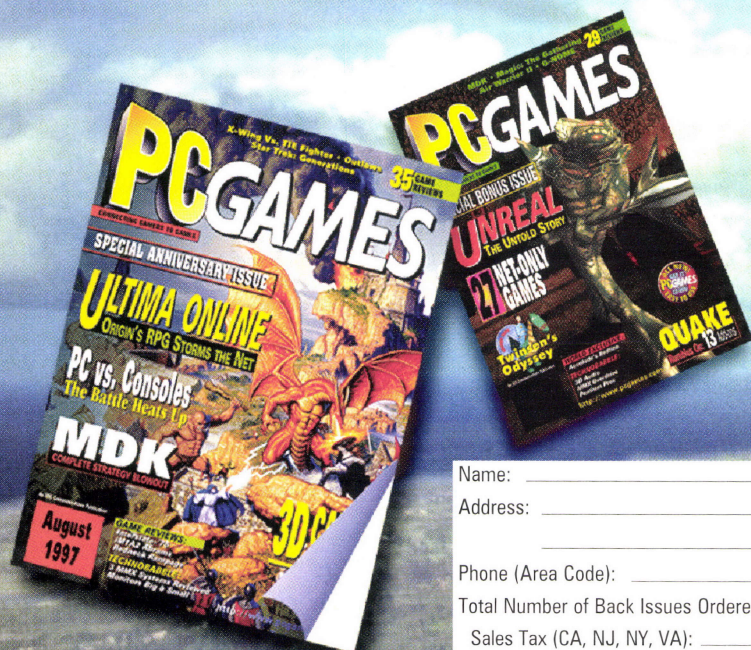
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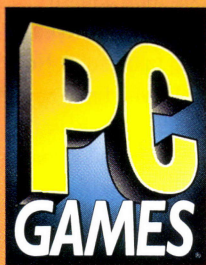
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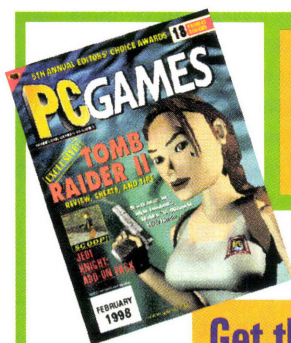
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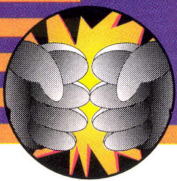
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FACE-OFF

Blade

Snipe

Stop the Scam?

Is there an unholy alliance between game designers, computer-hardware makers, and the OS gods in Redmond forcing gamers to spend a ton of cash on new 3D cards and PCs just to play the latest games? Is it true that whatever you buy today will be obsolete in a year? Blade argues in angry **bold** that there's an ugly conspiracy afoot. Snipe retorts in measured *italics* that technology upgrades are a necessary reality, and that the real issue is how to buy wisely.

Do you realize exactly how powerful a P200 is? Answer: Extremely powerful. Can you remember what that old 386 could do? A lot. This technology curve is just getting out of hand. I sold a 486 SX33 two years ago and invested in a state-of-the-art P100 resplendent with a whopping 16MB of RAM and a 2MB Diamond Stealth graphics card. Today it's virtually an antique in game-playing terms.

And that's wrong.

For once, I'm wholeheartedly sympathetic to your point of view—or for once, you're making some kind of sense. Keeping up with the technology curve IS brutally expensive, and I hate paying for it. Yet there are two justifications I can't escape. First, only four years after Wolfenstein 3D, I can play something amazing—like Quake II—that's light years ahead. And what about Jedi Knight, Hexen II, Longbow 2, Flying Corps, Links LS, and EF 2000? They make it worth keeping up with the hardware curve. Second, seeking to minimize damage to my bank account forced me to become smarter about the equipment I buy and encouraged me to build my own computer for less. I no longer worry about paying computer makers for what I don't need—and I get the most gaming value and longevity out of what I do purchase.

But don't you realize that the admittedly fantastic graphics of Quake II are what you're paying for, plus the power to push them? Quake II is closer to Doom III than Quake was—so how much has the technologically advanced gamer gained? Lots of aesthetics and little substance. Ask your tech-headed self: What's the most important component in your machine besides the processor? The video card. What does that say? That gamers are, as usual, sounding the cavalry charge to gaming enhancement through prettier graphics, more lights—improvements that are only skin deep. Isn't it about time gamers realized that what they have under the hood at a P200, 3Dfx level is plenty and should last more than just a year? This bubble should burst in a flash of colored lights.

Ah, but I like aesthetics. And you're making MY point. Yes, a P200 IS sufficient if you ordered or built your system wisely and didn't depend

on off-the-shelf models. A PC is much more than just a CPU and a video card. Buying a better motherboard and faster SCSI or Ultra DMA hard disks can channel data more swiftly. Better motherboards can accept faster CPUs later, saving you money in the long run. You may have a smart noggin and a strong heart, but if your arteries are clogged, you won't be playing the big game. The technology curve has taught me how to minimize obsolescence. That's why my P166 at home is still keeping up with off-the-shelf P233s a year and a half after I built it. True, the technology curve is a problem, but anything that forces gamers to leave ignorance behind and learn to be more self-sufficient is a good thing. It's a trade-off. If you'd rather be a victim, so be it.

But to be fair, you're in a much better position than Johnny

Consumer: You know what you're doing (allegedly). How many people who have new PCs now wouldn't know how to upgrade? A lot. The bottom line, though, is that a Pentium II 266 should last longer than a year. With all the stuff coming out requiring a Pentium (Indiana Jones Desktop Adventures, Caesar's Palace, Politika) that could have been written for a 486 with a little thought, aren't consumers paying for the laziness of software developers and the avarice of the hardware



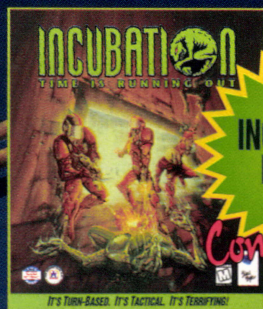
pushers? They are, and they shouldn't have to. They're being taken for a ride on a corporate Godzilla that tramples "old" stuff underfoot with promises of funkier 3D. Whoopee, but no thanks, if it's going to mean spending loads of cash every damn year.

We can whine all we want, but at the end of the day, we all want to play the games that require beefier hardware. That's why Jedi Knight is the best-selling game in the latest TRSTS sales reports from the NPD Group. That makes us part of the problem. If the case were otherwise, maybe the lot would be more inventive. Rather than cry, I still vote for facing reality, playing smart, and learning more about game systems so that when you do buy, you get the most value for your buck.

That's fine, but I still want to see a PII 266 last up to three years. Look what can be achieved already—I could happily stick with the current 3Dfx glory in all my games for some time to come.

Snipe would've had more to say, but he just blew another power supply. Blade is still on the run after visiting the local Circuit City with a mallet and busting up all the Packard Bell Pentium IIs on display.

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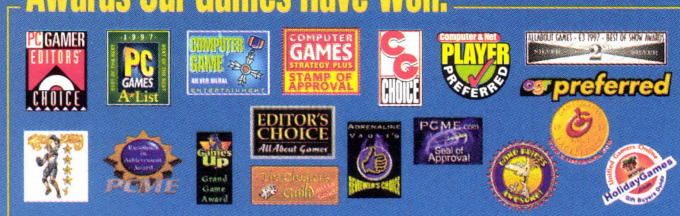
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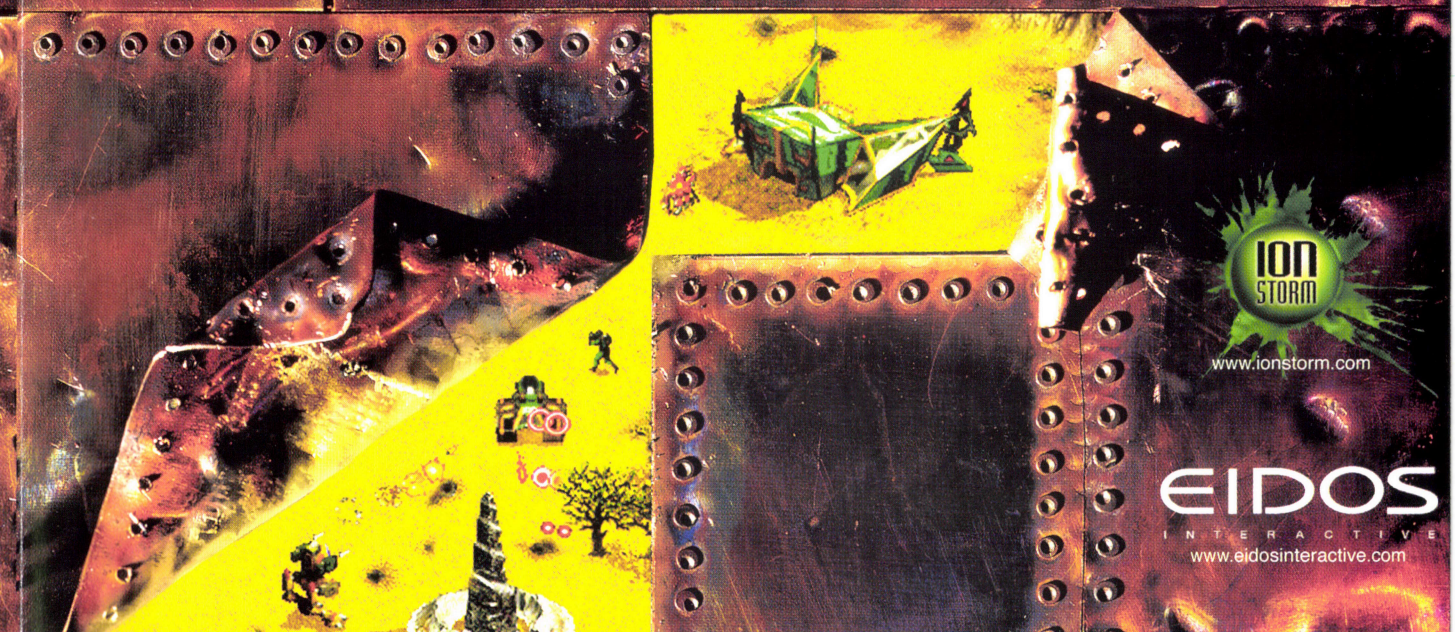
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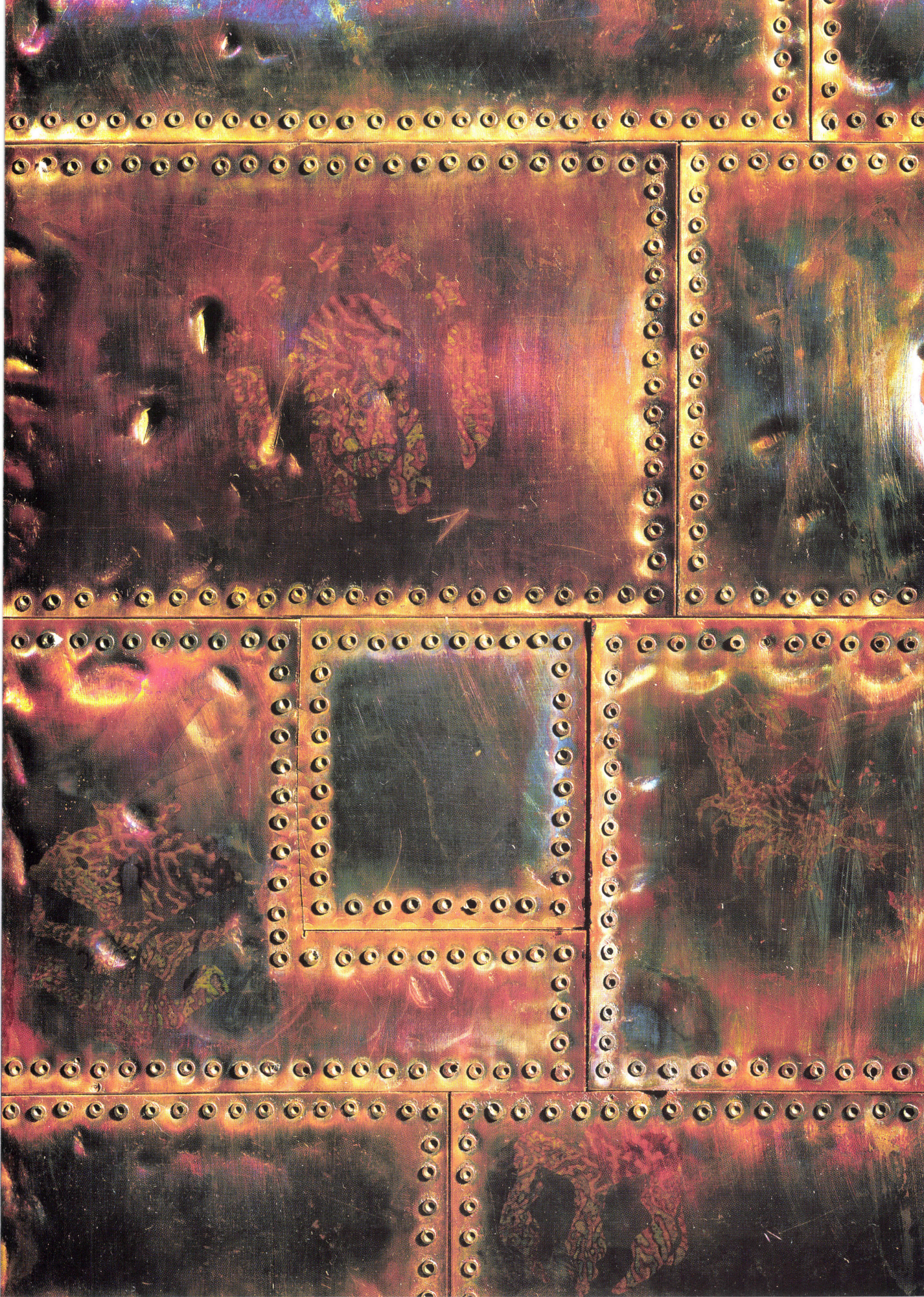
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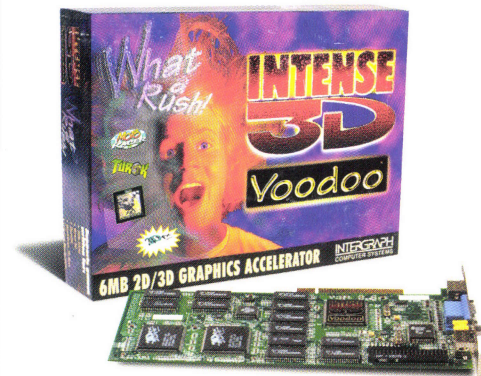
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